

## **Process “Survey” Executive Summary (Draft)**

### **November 16, 2022**

This process was led by the Faculty Senate Leadership Team with the support of the Chancellor and Provost. On October 27, 2022, a Google spreadsheet was sent to Faculty Senators asking them to list institutional processes that were negatively impacting their productivity and well-being, explain why the processes were burdensome, and suggest solutions for those processes. After confirming that the spreadsheet was a viable way to collect these data, we asked Faculty Senate caucus chairs to distribute the spreadsheet to their caucus members (typically College units) to collect information from a broader sample. The spreadsheet was downloaded on November 14, 2022, so we could compile these results.

Over the three weeks that the spreadsheet was open for responses, it accumulated 341 rows of responses. We did not ask for names or any additional information on the responses, and we downloaded the spreadsheet to strip any google log-in information. Assuming an individual faculty member entered more than one process issue, the total response rate was likely less than 300 faculty members.

The processes that were mentioned were grouped and tallied by Faculty Senate President Schussler and Faculty Senate RA Jordan Shipley. Below is the tally of the top process issues, a brief synthesis of potential overarching issues, and below that is a summary of faculty responses and exemplary quotes. The top 13 process issues were:

1. Faculty review processes (Elements, interfolio, PPPR, etc)
2. Concur / travel
3. Parking
4. Grants office
5. Human subjects / iMedRIS / IRB
6. Assessment reporting (SACS, VolCore)
7. Training videos / modules (K@TE)
8. Faculty doing administrative work
9. IRIS certifications
10. Facilities support
11. GTA stipends
12. Space issues
13. Classroom technology

### ***Overarching themes***

- Faculty doing work that used to be done by administrative assistants or facilities staff thus reducing time for research, teaching, service
- Overwhelming number of new software systems that don't function optimally and make work harder than it was with former systems
- Not putting funds where they need to go to improve support functions (e.g. grants office, graduate student funding, facilities services, classroom AV)
- Campus growth outpacing infrastructure (parking, space)

### **Faculty review processes**

Most of the comments focused on frustrations with Elements and its lack of ability to capture workload across different disciplinary types and the way it formats the report, leading to faculty spending hours to re-format the document. There were other comments about frustrations with the different formats required for all the different types of review processes (APPR, retention review, PPPR, etc.) citing loss of faculty work time to meet formatting requirements that seemed unnecessary.

“The output for the Elements is terrible and I must save as a Word file and then totally reformat it.”

“‘One size fits all’ systems end up fitting nothing. We have already written CVs, publications lists, etc., why do we need to redo everything?”

“The interface and methods for entry of information is amazingly tedious and time-consuming. It takes up to dozens of mouse clicks and at least one page load to enter a simple piece of information such as a publication or service activity.”

“There are specific requirements of how things should be formatted but no good, editable templates provided for most documents.”

Proposed solutions:

- Return to filling out a form for the department each year
- Use CVs
- Make a template where we can easily copy and paste info from our CV

### **Concur / Travel**

Most comments focused on frustrations with the interface on Concur, with faculty mentioning how many hours they are spending on a process that used to take far less time. International travel submissions seem to be an acute pain point with Concur. Faculty mentioned slow reimbursements, not being able to submit certain items, or just not bothering to submit because of the frustration with the system. World Travel was also cited as charging for their services which does not include the cheapest fares.

“It is too complicated, time-wasting, and travel-discouraging, especially for international travel. The last time I used it, I think I spent more time on Concur than to write my own paper for the conference. It is an absurd system.”

“I recently ended up spending about \$2000 extra on a grant and lost 2 days of work because World Travel expected my research assistants to fly only on an airline in their computer system- not the typically used inexpensive airline in the region we were working.”

“It takes forever to get reimbursed for travel - 2-3 months now or more.”

“My office will not submit or edit Concur reports. It seems their only role is to reject the reports, send many emails regarding the rejections, and then we have to go in to change the reports (despite all of them being delegates).”

Proposed solutions:

- Return to previous system
- Rewrite policies to be more clear

### **Parking**

Like students, faculty are feeling parking pains, particularly if they have to leave in the middle of the day and try to find a parking space when they return. They mentioned that students are now parking in faculty spaces because they lack parking too, leading to no spaces in faculty areas. Some faculty mentioned needing to park on football weekends so they could work and not having that available.

“People arrive late. Severely frustrated when/if parking is found. Hours are being wasted weekly hunting for faculty space.”

“I was late to class because it took me 20mins to find a parking spot, ended up parking at the yellow curb with the risk of getting it towed or fined.”

Some of us are working on football Saturdays, doing experiments, checking on our decrepit infrastructure, etc. In recent seasons when some parking slots were set aside for that purpose...”

Proposed solutions:

- Gated faculty lots
- Build additional parking

### **Grants office**

Frustrations mostly centered on the new proposal submission time frames which were seen as unnecessarily restrictive and doing harm to faculty ability to apply to grants. The difficulty this poses to collaboration was often mentioned because UT’s early deadlines make it impossible to coordinate with other institutions in the same time frame. Cost sharing seemed to be a pain point for some, as well as the length of Cayuse approval for multi-department proposals, and problems coordinating with UT and UTIA research offices. While many appreciate the reviews the grants office conducts, they suggest that the faculty are ultimately responsible for submissions and these new deadlines are imposing barriers to their work. I

“OSP won't send out a grant without their interpretation being represented, then SPA won't allow costs because they disagree with the interpretation.”

“One of the big slow-downs on grants that include multiple departments and colleges is just collecting all of the layers of Cayuse approvals - that alone can take many days. It can easily require collecting sign off from ~ 10 different people around the campus.”

“Haven't submitted under new system but would have precluded us getting grants submitted that were successfully funded if we had had to work under these rules before.”

“The new very early deadlines cause difficulties when fleshing up proposals with external collaborators. External collaborators do not understand why they should complete the work on a completely different timetable than every other institutions. In addition, some calls for proposals are published at very short notice and the new proposal preparation deadlines make it extremely difficult to respond to such calls in a timely manner. Overall this new policy hinders the capability of PIs to acquire funding that supports the core mission of the university.”

Proposed solutions:

- OSP and SPA should work together
- Increase Office of Research staffing
- Decentralize proposal preparation

### **Human subjects**

Most frustration was aimed at the iMedRIS software which was globally seen as non-intuitive and designed for medical research versus other less risky forms of research. Some mentioned conflicting information from compliance officers that delay approval, and perceived over-reach in terms of what is being reviewed. Some mentioned that collaboration has become harder with different institutions because we can't get our approvals done quickly enough, and that we are obtaining a reputation outside our institution for difficulty in IRB review.

“It's clunky, confusing, convoluted, repetitive, and counter intuitive. Thus, it's everything software should not be. Even our departmental NIH representative can often make little sense of it.”

“The review process has moved from baseline ethics reviews to now being questions on the validity of the research posed and theoretical contributions. Feedback from the IRB about incorrect theoretical frameworks is outside their purview and expertise.”

“It's awful. I have to re-teach myself how to use the system every time I need to submit anything to IRB.”

“Our IRB is so conservative, stringent, and inconsistent that it has a regional reputation now as the worst to work with. Graduate students are beginning to deliberately design projects to stay away from anything that remotely resembles human subjects research, even if it hurts their project, because their fear of and frustration with the IRB process is so strong. In short, the IRB is hamstringing research that involves any kind of interview work in the humanities.”

Proposed solutions:

- Use a different product/Cayuse
- Use a branching system that asks up front if you are doing medical research and excludes/includes questions based on your answer

### **Assessment reporting**

Much of this was centered on either SACS assessment or the upcoming need to assess VolCore courses every 3 years. Some mentioned frustration working with the Campus Labs software. In general this was seen as burdensome work that had no apparent need except to check a box for accreditation. There was frustration that the results do not seem to be used for improving programs to at least justify the time spent.

“Departments will now be assessing thousands of Gen Ed courses every 3 years; the amount of labor entailed is unfathomable.”

“A lot of metrics, much time to gather, but it seems just to be used to satisfy accreditor requirements, not for institutional change.”

“Right now my School does 6 different forms of assessment. We were active in develop VolCore classes, but now we find out yet more is going to be added to their assessment with them being every three years.”

Proposed solutions:

- Merge VolCore with SACSCOC/simplify the process
- Use assessment results to make tangible changes
- Get rid of SACS

### **Training videos / modules**

People expressed frustration about having to watch the same videos over and over again and wondered why we couldn't just take the quiz without watching the video to show that we still remember the information. Some wanted information in written form versus being forced to watch a video. There was frustration that faculty are being forced to do this for liability purposes and wondering why it has to be done every year.

“UT has SO many training platforms to keep up with. Coming from another institution where everything is centrally located on one platform, this has been a nightmare to navigate.”

“Do I really need to watch Simon and his cybersecurity friends for a 50th time?”

“Why are so many compliance procedures enforced on a 365 day cycle? Example: KATE training sessions. This is wasteful. Most of these procedures have no relation to the position of the earth around the sun.”

Proposed solutions:

- Update training videos to be applicable to likely situations
- Use only as a refresher
- Change timing so that training is not required during the beginning or end of the semester, very busy time already
- Just give us the information in writing and let us take the quiz

### **Faculty administrative load**

Some faculty discussed the overarching issue of faculty being asked to do more and more paperwork, learning new systems to input information that used to be done by office staff. There was a feeling that more and more is being added to our workload without anything being removed. In some cases, faculty are explicitly being told they have to do work that was previously done by a staff member who left the office.

“I’m shocked how much of my time is being spent learning all our online systems has consumed (for data entry, retrieval, approvals, and more). For context, I’m an experienced department head so I understand the job, and I’m not tech averse (I consider myself slightly better than average technical proficiency). But all the systems we have seem surprisingly burdensome. UTK is paying me a lot of money to spend time dealing with software rather than addressing the issues needed to make my department better, and all these systems have significantly reduced what I have been able to do for the department so far.”

“It is common to ask faculty to take the extra load to distribute the job of a person that is no longer here until the position is filled. This may include doing more emergency work, more teaching, or more clinic coverage. This can be exhausting.”

“Departmental office staff seem to do less to support faculty. Our admin staff used to make copies for faculty (with several days’ notice), help with complex scheduling issues, help find rooms, help organize campus visits, etc. Now TT and NTTF do all that. We have great staff, but they no longer do much to support faculty in their day to day efforts.”

“Our time for teaching and research is getting eroded and fragmented excessively by our administration adding more and more layers of compliance and red tape.”

Proposed solutions:

- Spend less money on Student Success and more on department staffing
- Hire more staff!

### **IRIS certifications**

Faculty expressed frustration with monthly effort certifications saying they didn’t always understand what they were supposed to be doing and why. They also indicated the burden of having to certify leave and hours for staff that work with them. All of this takes time and feels like something administrative staff in the office should be doing.

“There are no clear instructions and answers I have received are vague. I am told to do what I think is "right", then am accused of improper certification.”

“Why do we need to even do this? I have no idea how I am paid from different accounts, and I feel as if I am falsifying information every month because I really don't know where the money is coming from.”

“Percentage is based on dollar amounts, not effort. Worse, we have to certify down to two decimal places. Nobody can do that.”

Proposed solutions:

- Stop requiring it
- Reduce frequency
- Make certification effort-based, and don't require such specific percentages
- Have office staff do this

### **Facilities support**

Many mentioned that not only did they now have to take out their own “tiny trash” bins, but that they are also having to vacuum their own offices because this is not being done unless it is specifically requested. Some suggested that paying custodial workers more might be a solution.

“My office is not cleaned. I have to vacuum my own office in addition to taking out my own trash. Requests to have the carpet vacuumed are ignored.”

“We currently must sweep our own lab and at times bring in our personal vacuum to clean offices. The Tini trash is a joke and the recycling bins seem to magically move to one spot in the building?”

“My office has not been vacuumed since at least February 2020”

Proposed solutions:

- Pay custodial staff more
- Hire more staff

### **GTA stipends**

Faculty expressed frustration that we are losing good students because our stipends are not as high as other institutions.

“Right now, the equivalent department at UGA is paying 6K more than my department, and that will go up to be 8K more. We can't recruit quality grad students, so research progress is slow, poor, and that costs us papers and grant \$.”

“Because the stipends for GTAs in my department are so low, we are having a hard time filling open GTA slots each year. We are having to hire people in order to avoid canceling lab sections.”

“Recruitment is difficult, students end up taking outside jobs to make ends meet, they do not have time to focus on their degrees.”

Proposed solutions:

- Pay grad students more

### **Space issues**

With the growth in students in campus and the building of the new business school building, there is frustration that there is not enough classroom space to offer the classes we now need and a lack of overflow office space to place faculty who are being displaced. Also mentioned was a shortage of team meeting space on campus where faculty could gather since so much of the space is devoted to students. Faculty want some space.

“UT decided to move ahead with a second new business building with no adequate facilities for the departments and entities housed in Dunford, Greve, and Henson Halls. This will gut those programs and departments, and demonstrates callous disregard for Disability Services as well.”

“As space tightens on campus there is less and less space for informal faculty discussions. The campus feels inhumane which is the other side of all these process issues. We need convenient spaces for those conversations that spark new ideas, etc.”

“There aren't enough classrooms; schedules from prior year just ‘roll over,’ and we are expected to use the same schedule/classrooms the following year, which doesn't work. I spend HOURS trying to figure out how to assign courses and swap rooms.”

Proposed solutions:

- Increase cooperation with registrar's office to make room assignment easier
- Add more buildings
- Find space for faculty offices

### **Classroom technology**

Frustration was expressed specifically about Cynap not always working in classrooms, or the interface being different from classroom to classroom, causing confusion. In general, classroom technology was just seen as problematic for some.

“Time wasted, and from students' POV it always looks as if the instructor is at fault!”

“The system [Cynap] is too complicated and usually doesn't work.”

“Classroom AV - I use HDMI but the sound never works.”

Proposed solutions:

- Install computers in classrooms rather than Cynap
- Ask faculty what they actually need in the classroom (be sure to consult NTTF)