



ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

TECHNICAL REPORT

NOVEMBER 2024 | BUDGET OPTIMIZATION INITIATIVE



REPORT OVERVIEW

BUDGET OPTIMIZATION INITIATIVE: ADMIN SUPPORT

This report presents a comprehensive analysis based on focus group, survey, and benchmarking data (mixed-methods data) with supporting case studies that strengthen the evidence base for our recommendations.

The report is structured to first present the mixed-methods data, detailing findings from each data source. This is followed by case study information, organized by the seven key themes identified in the data analysis. Each theme section connects our recommendations to ISU's strategic goals, demonstrating how our approach supports ISU's mission and overall objectives.

Objective:

To improve ISU's administrative functions by implementing a matrix reporting structure that enhances efficiency, adaptability, and effectiveness.

Overview:

The matrix structure centralizes core administrative services, encourages collaboration, and supports structured training and career development, directly contributing to ISU's strategic objectives.

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What is our
METHOD?

Through a combination of survey responses, industry standards, and benchmarking definitions, we developed a comprehensive definition of Administrative Support Services specific to ISU. Our survey asked administrative support staff to indicate how frequently they performed various functions, providing a data-driven foundation for identifying key support areas.

The data revealed that, on average, administrative support staff performed these tasks “Most of the Time” to “About Half of the Time.” This highlights potential areas for function realignment or delegation to optimize efficiency.

FREQUENCY OF TASK



CORE FUNCTION AREA

Office Support and Documentation

- Word processing, filing, and composing a variety of business documents.
- Reception duties and handling office communications.



Data Management, Reporting, and Analysis

- Gathering, researching, and compiling data for reports.
- Summarizing material for reports and presentations.
- Use of computerized systems for data entry and retrieval.



Financial Skills and Record-keeping

- Financial record-keeping methods and principles.
- Research and compile financial information, experience in preparing summaries & reports.
- Bookkeeping and advanced Microsoft Excel functions.
- Document control procedures.



Project Coordination and Management

- Balancing workloads for multiple projects.
- Planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating special projects.
- Event planning and coordination.



Policy Interpretation and Application

- Interpret, apply, and explain complex information, regulations, policies, and services.
- Understanding and applying laws, regulations, and complex policies.



Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

- Independent problem solution and performing liaison activities.
- Analytical skills for identifying problems, defining alternatives, and developing recommendations.



Records System Management

- Monitoring and correcting errors in records systems.
- Handle multiple or highly specialized record-keeping systems.



Communication and Interpersonal Skills

- Composing and proofreading business correspondence.
- Communicating with individuals from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, especially in stressful situations.

In examining the perspectives of supervisors and administrative support staff, both groups identified common challenges across several key areas, though each perspective offers unique insights.

SUPERVISOR VIEW

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT VIEW

WORKLOAD & COMPENSATION

Supervisors emphasize the difficulty of attracting and retaining administrative support staff due to insufficient pay and heavy workloads. They note that support staff are often tasked with responsibilities beyond their role’s scope, and low compensation relative to these demands results in high turnover and decreased morale.

Administrative support personnel also express frustration with the high workload and low pay, linking these issues directly to stress and health concerns. They report handling an increasing volume of responsibilities, with additional tasks often added without corresponding compensation, further exacerbating dissatisfaction and burnout.

COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION

Supervisors cite challenges with interdepartmental communication, emphasizing the complexity of navigating various hierarchies and the frequent miscommunication between departments. This difficulty in establishing clear communication channels affects both task efficiency and relationship management across teams.

Administrative staff echo concerns about communication, specifically noting issues with coordination within and across departments. They mention challenges in managing effective communication with faculty, coordinating with vendors, and receiving timely updates, all of which hinder smooth operations and teamwork.

SUPPORT & TRAINING

Supervisors identify a need for standardized training for administrative support staff, particularly for university-specific systems and processes. They observe that support staff often lack sufficient resources and guidance to meet the specialized demands of their roles, slowing onboarding and limiting staff effectiveness.

Administrative staff feel similarly, reporting insufficient training and lack of access to essential resources as obstacles. They emphasize the need for more structured support during onboarding and ongoing access to resources to perform their duties confidently and competently.



TASK & TIME MANAGEMENT

SUPERVISOR VIEW

Supervisors recognize that administrative staff struggle with time management due to the volume and diversity of tasks required, often under tight deadlines. This multi-tasking expectation creates challenges in prioritizing work effectively, particularly during peak academic periods.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT VIEW

Administrative staff confirm that balancing numerous responsibilities is a consistent challenge. They cite the pressure of short deadlines and multiple overlapping duties as primary stressors, which can lead to reduced productivity and a sense of being perpetually overwhelmed.

INTERPERSONAL & ORGANIZATIONAL

Supervisors acknowledge that administrative support staff sometimes face interpersonal conflicts, including lack of respect from faculty members who may expect them to perform outside their job scope. This misalignment of expectations can strain professional relationships and affect team morale.

Administrative staff describe similar interpersonal challenges, noting a lack of respect and recognition from some colleagues. They often feel undervalued, with some reporting conflicts over job boundaries and responsibilities. These dynamics contribute to a workplace culture where support staff feel their contributions are not fully appreciated.

ROLE CLARITY & JOB DESCRIPTION

Supervisors report that role ambiguity is an ongoing issue, particularly when support roles are shared between departments. They find that without clear job descriptions, support staff are frequently assigned tasks that fall outside their defined responsibilities, creating inefficiencies and unmet expectations.

Administrative staff also experience role ambiguity, noting that job duties often differ from their official descriptions. This lack of clarity leads to confusion, frustration, and a feeling of being unprepared for certain responsibilities, impacting their overall job satisfaction and productivity.



KEY INSIGHTS

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT ROLES

- 38 %** Reported experiencing burnout at or above half the time.
- 49 %** Reported that their workloads impact their work-life balance at or above half the time.
- 14 %** Reported that their job description matches what they are asked to do at or above half the time.
- 21 %** 5 year turn over trend rate among Administrative Assistants 1&2
- 29 *** Different titles associated with Office and Administrative Support Occupations at ISU

SUPERVISOR ROLES

- 55 %** Faculty indicated that they are performing tasks they would prefer to delegate to their administrative support staff but are unable to
- 37 %** Staff indicated that they are performing tasks they would prefer to delegate to their administrative support staff but are unable to
- +++** There is overwhelming support for a workplace training program specific to Administrative Support from both Faculty (84%) and Staff (95%) supervisors

DIFFERENT VIEWS

The survey results provide a comprehensive view of both internal and external support needs and bottlenecks experienced by faculty and staff. Internally, both groups show high utilization and need for support in Finance, Office, and Data services, indicating these areas are essential for day-to-day operations. Bottlenecks are common in these high-demand areas, with staff in particular facing frequent delays. Policy and Project Management are also areas of moderate utilization, with both faculty and staff often requiring support and occasionally encountering bottlenecks. In contrast, support areas like Communication and Thinking are less frequently utilized, and respondents report fewer bottlenecks, suggesting that tasks related to strategic thinking or routine communication may be more self-sustained.

When looking at external support services, ITS, Other Departments/Colleges, and Student Support stand out as high-utilization areas, used frequently by both faculty and staff. However, these areas also experience frequent bottlenecks, particularly for staff. Lower-utilization services such as Facilities, Financial, and Human Resources see occasional usage, primarily on an as-needed basis. Despite lower frequency, these areas still present moderate bottlenecks, especially for staff in Financial and Human Resources support.

Overall, the data reveal that high-demand support areas—both internal and external—are often accompanied by bottlenecks, indicating an opportunity to improve process efficiency. Addressing bottlenecks in frequently used services, while streamlining occasional support areas, could enhance productivity and satisfaction across both faculty and staff roles.



KEY INSIGHTS

STAFF

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

- Utilization
 - Always: 31.7%
 - Often: 26.8%
 - Sometimes: 12.2%
 - Rarely: 14.6%
 - Never: 14.6%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 5.0%
 - Often: 10.0%
 - Sometimes: 41.0%
 - Rarely: 28.2%
 - Never: 14.6%

Data Management, Reporting, and Analysis

- Utilization
 - Always: 38.6%
 - Often: 25.0%
 - Sometimes: 22.7%
 - Rarely: 10.0%
 - Never: 3.7%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 5.0%
 - Often: 5.0%
 - Sometimes: 61.5%
 - Rarely: 28.2%
 - Never: 5.3%

Financial Skills and Record-Keeping

- Utilization
 - Always: 27.9%
 - Often: 30.2%
 - Sometimes: 27.9%
 - Rarely: 10.5%
 - Never: 3.5%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 3.5%
 - Often: 10.0%
 - Sometimes: 61.5%
 - Rarely: 28.2%
 - Never: 3.5%

THE 8 CORE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Office Support and Documentation

- Utilization
 - Always: 36.4%
 - Often: 22.7%
 - Sometimes: 29.5%
 - Rarely: 7.5%
 - Never: 3.9%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 3.5%
 - Often: 10.5%
 - Sometimes: 51.3%
 - Rarely: 28.2%
 - Never: 6.5%

Policy Interpretation and Application

- Utilization
 - Always: 16.3%
 - Often: 14.0%
 - Sometimes: 32.6%
 - Rarely: 27.9%
 - Never: 9.2%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 3.2%
 - Often: 10.5%
 - Sometimes: 41.0%
 - Rarely: 41.0%
 - Never: 4.3%

Project Coordination and Management

- Utilization
 - Always: 29.5%
 - Often: 29.5%
 - Sometimes: 18.2%
 - Rarely: 11.4%
 - Never: 11.4%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 5.3%
 - Often: 7.1%
 - Sometimes: 41.0%
 - Rarely: 25.6%
 - Never: 21.0%

Records System Management

- Utilization
 - Always: 32.6%
 - Often: 32.6%
 - Sometimes: 23.3%
 - Rarely: 6.5%
 - Never: 5.0%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 5.0%
 - Often: 10.5%
 - Sometimes: 61.5%
 - Rarely: 20.5%
 - Never: 2.5%

Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

- Utilization
 - Always: 27.9%
 - Often: 23.3%
 - Sometimes: 23.3%
 - Rarely: 14.0%
 - Never: 11.6%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 6.0%
 - Often: 8.0%
 - Sometimes: 48.7%
 - Rarely: 30.8%
 - Never: 6.5%

For Staff: High utilization areas align with bottlenecks in Data Management, Financial Skills, and Records System Management, indicating these functions are critical yet face frequent delays.

KEY INSIGHTS

FACULTY

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

- Utilization
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 38.9%
 - Sometimes: 25.0%
 - Rarely: 19.4%
 - Never: 16.7%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 42.1%
 - Rarely: 26.3%
 - Never: 31.6%

Data Management, Reporting, and Analysis

- Utilization
 - Always: 21.1%
 - Often: 31.6%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 10.5%
 - Never: 10.5%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 63.2%
 - Rarely: 21.1%
 - Never: 15.8%

Financial Skills and Record-Keeping

- Utilization
 - Always: 15.8%
 - Often: 31.6%
 - Sometimes: 36.8%
 - Rarely: 10.5%
 - Never: 5.3%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 47.4%
 - Rarely: 26.3%
 - Never: 26.3%

THE 8 CORE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Office Support and Documentation

- Utilization
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 42.1%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 21.1%
 - Never: 10.5%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 26.3%
 - Never: 47.4%

Policy Interpretation and Application

- Utilization
 - Always: 10.5%
 - Often: 26.3%
 - Sometimes: 36.8%
 - Rarely: 15.8%
 - Never: 10.5%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 42.1%
 - Rarely: 26.3%
 - Never: 31.6%

Project Coordination and Management

- Utilization
 - Always: 15.8%
 - Often: 26.3%
 - Sometimes: 36.8%
 - Rarely: 15.8%
 - Never: 5.3%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 21.1%
 - Rarely: 36.8%
 - Never: 42.1%

Records System Management

- Utilization
 - Always: 16.7%
 - Often: 44.4%
 - Sometimes: 27.8%
 - Rarely: 5.6%
 - Never: 5.6%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 42.1%
 - Rarely: 36.8%
 - Never: 21.1%

Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

- Utilization
 - Always: 21.1%
 - Often: 31.6%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 10.5%
 - Never: 10.5%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Often: 0%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 26.3%
 - Never: 47.4%

For Faculty: Data Management and Records System Management are both high-utilization and high-bottleneck areas, suggesting a need for streamlining and support in these functions.

KEY INSIGHTS

STAFF

OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Facilities Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 12.8%
 - Several times per year: 41.0%
 - A few times per month: 25.6%
 - Weekly: 10.3%
 - Daily: 10.3%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 28.2%
 - Rarely: 28.2% | Never: 43.6%

Financial Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 10.3%
 - Several times per year: 46.2%
 - A few times per month: 23.1%
 - Weekly: 12.8%
 - Daily: 7.7%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 61.5%
 - Rarely: 28.2% | Never: 10.3%

Human Resources (HR) Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 10.3%
 - Several times per year: 56.4%
 - A few times per month: 15.4%
 - Weekly: 10.3%
 - Daily: 7.7%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 61.5%
 - Rarely: 28.2% | Never: 10.3%

ITS (Information Technology Services)

- Utilization
 - Never: 2.6%
 - Several times per year: 10.3%
 - A few times per month: 48.7%
 - Weekly: 20.5%
 - Daily: 17.9%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 12.8%
 - Sometimes: 51.3%
 - Rarely: 28.2% | Never: 20.5%

Marketing and Communications

- Utilization
 - Never: 17.9%
 - Several times per year: 30.8%
 - A few times per month: 25.6%
 - Weekly: 17.9%
 - Daily: 7.7%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 41.0%
 - Rarely: 41.0% | Never: 18.0%

Other Departments/Colleges

- Utilization
 - Never: 0%
 - Several times per year: 17.9%
 - A few times per month: 38.5%
 - Weekly: 25.6%
 - Daily: 18.0%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 20.5%
 - Sometimes: 61.5%
 - Rarely: 17.9% | Never: 0%

Student Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 2.6%
 - Several times per year: 17.9%
 - A few times per month: 25.6%
 - Weekly: 15.4%
 - Daily: 38.5%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 17.9%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 76.9%
 - Rarely: 5.2% | Never: 0%

For Staff: High utilization aligns with bottlenecks in Student Support and Other Departments/Colleges. Staff also experience bottlenecks in Financial Support, suggesting that these areas are both essential and frequently delayed.

KEY INSIGHTS

FACULTY

Facilities Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 10.5%
 - Several times per year: 57.9%
 - A few times per month: 15.8%
 - Weekly: 5.3%
 - Daily: 10.5%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 26.3% | Never: 47.4%

Financial Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 10.5%
 - Several times per year: 68.4%
 - A few times per month: 15.8%
 - Weekly: 5.3%
 - Daily: 0%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 26.3% | Never: 47.4%

Human Resources (HR) Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 0%
 - Several times per year: 63.2%
 - A few times per month: 21.1%
 - Weekly: 10.5%
 - Daily: 5.3%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 31.6%
 - Rarely: 47.4% | Never: 21.1%

OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

ITS (Information Technology Services)

- Utilization
 - Never: 5.3%
 - Several times per year: 10.5%
 - A few times per month: 52.6%
 - Weekly: 26.3%
 - Daily: 5.3%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 10.5%
 - Sometimes: 42.1%
 - Rarely: 31.6% | Never: 15.8%

Marketing and Communications

- Utilization
 - Never: 15.8%
 - Several times per year: 36.8%
 - A few times per month: 31.6%
 - Weekly: 10.5%
 - Daily: 5.3%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 26.3%
 - Rarely: 42.1% | Never: 31.6%

Other Departments/Colleges

- Utilization
 - Never: 5.6%
 - Several times per year: 22.2%
 - A few times per month: 33.3%
 - Weekly: 11.1%
 - Daily: 27.8%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 0%
 - About half the time: 0%
 - Sometimes: 42.1%
 - Rarely: 21.1% | Never: 36.8%

Student Support

- Utilization
 - Never: 5.3%
 - Several times per year: 31.6%
 - A few times per month: 21.1%
 - Weekly: 5.3%
 - Daily: 36.8%
- Bottlenecks
 - Always: 0%
 - Most of the time: 10.5%
 - About half the time: 10.5%
 - Sometimes: 36.8%
 - Rarely: 26.3% | Never: 15.8%

For Faculty: ITS and Other Departments/Colleges are high-utilization areas with frequent bottlenecks, indicating a need for improved efficiency or responsiveness. Student Support also shows delays, though faculty rely on it somewhat less frequently than staff.



The case study information is structured as a strategic analysis that addresses specific administrative challenges identified through survey data, aligns recommended actions with ISU's Strategic Plan, and provides supporting data and case studies to reinforce each point. The analysis is organized by identified themes and includes the following components for each theme:

1. Theme from Data: This section highlights the core issue, derived from survey findings or data analysis. Each theme reflects an operational challenge within ISU's administrative framework, such as inconsistent service delivery, siloed processes, redundant tasks, or lack of career development.
2. Recommendation: This provides a targeted solution to address each theme. Recommendations include actions like standardizing roles and responsibilities, implementing a matrix structure, streamlining processes, centralizing training, and improving data security. Each recommendation is crafted to directly address the identified challenge and improve ISU's administrative efficiency and staff satisfaction.
3. ISU Strategic Plan Alignment: Each recommendation is connected to specific objectives within ISU's Strategic Plan, emphasizing how the proposed solutions support the university's broader goals. This alignment section describes how the recommendation advances one or more of ISU's strategic goals, such as enhancing student experience, strengthening programmatic excellence, fostering collaboration, and expanding research opportunities. The detailed explanations demonstrate the strategic significance of each recommendation and its impact on ISU's objectives.
4. Supporting Data and Case Studies: This section provides evidence from external research and literature to support the recommendations. It includes references to studies and expert analyses that validate the recommended actions, showing that similar approaches have been effective in other higher education settings or comparable organizational structures. These references add credibility and underscore the relevance of each recommendation.

1

NEED FOR IMPROVED CONSISTENCY IN SERVICE DELIVERY**Theme from Data:**

Inconsistent processes lead to perceptions of unequal workloads and inefficiencies.

Recommendation:

Establish standardized roles, responsibilities, and documentation to ensure equitable workloads and service consistency.

ISU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Goal 1: Student Access, Opportunity, Retention, and Success - Objective 1.2: Enhance the student experience through reliable and consistent support services.

Establishing standardized roles, responsibilities, and documentation within ISU's administrative functions directly contributes to enhancing the student experience by ensuring that students receive consistent and equitable support. When processes are uniform and predictable, students benefit from a dependable administrative structure that meets their needs efficiently and accurately. This consistency reduces delays, improves service quality, and builds student trust in ISU's support systems, contributing positively to retention and overall satisfaction. By creating a reliable framework for administrative functions, ISU aligns with its mission of providing accessible and supportive services to students, thereby fostering a positive environment that prioritizes their success and well-being.

Goal 2: Strengthening Programmatic Excellence - Objective 2.2: Standardize procedures to optimize resource allocation.

Standardizing administrative procedures is essential for optimizing resource allocation across ISU, as it ensures that resources—time, personnel, and funding—are distributed equitably and efficiently. By defining clear roles and responsibilities, ISU can prevent the overburdening of some staff members while underutilizing others, creating a balanced and efficient work environment. Standardization also minimizes redundancies and aligns departmental activities with the university's broader programmatic goals, contributing to a cohesive and high-performing administrative structure. This alignment with programmatic excellence not only improves operational efficiency but also supports ISU's reputation as a well-organized and strategically focused institution, ensuring resources are used effectively to advance academic and administrative priorities.

SUPPORTING DATA & CASE STUDIES

- Senge (2006) emphasizes the role of systems thinking in creating unified, consistent organizational practices, supporting the need for standardized administrative functions.
- Ruben & De Lisi (2017) highlight the importance of balancing efficiency and effectiveness in higher education, which aligns with ISU's strategic focus on delivering consistent services.
- Piscopo & Silveira (2013) and Galligan et al. (2020) discuss the importance of role standardization in maintaining service reliability and equity.
- Adelino & Silva (2012) emphasize the transformative role of technology in creating consistency.

2

IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION AND INTERDEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT

Theme from Data:

Administrative processes are in silos that lead to inefficiencies.

Recommendation:

Implement a matrix structure to improve collaboration and better integrate interdepartmental support.

ISU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Goal 3: Cultivating External Partnerships - Objective 3.1: Strengthen collaborations across departments.

Implementing a matrix structure enhances ISU's ability to foster interdepartmental collaboration, directly supporting the goal of cultivating external partnerships. By breaking down silos, the matrix model creates pathways for departments to work together seamlessly, allowing ISU to present a unified front in its interactions with external partners. When internal processes are collaborative, ISU can better respond to partnership opportunities by leveraging diverse expertise and resources across departments, making it a more attractive and cohesive partner. This interconnected approach strengthens ISU's reputation with external organizations, demonstrating that ISU is a well-coordinated institution capable of supporting complex partnerships and providing value through unified, cross-departmental engagement.

Goal 4: Expanding Research, Clinical, and Creative Activities - Objective 4.3: Improve collaboration to support interdisciplinary initiatives.

The matrix structure is also crucial for expanding interdisciplinary research, clinical, and creative activities by fostering collaboration across departments and academic units. Interdisciplinary initiatives require administrative support that is flexible, integrated, and responsive to diverse project needs, which the matrix model provides. With a collaborative structure, ISU's administrative teams can better support interdisciplinary projects by pooling resources and knowledge across departments, facilitating a smoother flow of information and support. This improved collaboration enables ISU to pursue complex research agendas, innovative clinical programs, and creative activities that span multiple fields, making the institution a leader in interdisciplinary work. By aligning administrative processes to support cross-departmental collaboration, ISU creates an environment where interdisciplinary initiatives can thrive, meeting the university's goals for research and creative expansion.

SUPPORTING DATA & CASE STUDIES

- Birnbaum (1988) describes the complexities of fostering collaboration in higher education, underscoring the matrix model's ability to break down silos.
- Kezar & Eckel (2002) emphasize that cultural buy-in is critical for collaborative success, supporting the recommendation for culturally responsive strategies within ISU.
- Curlee & Gordon (2011), Newell et al. (2008), and Sequilla et al. (2017) demonstrate how matrix structures support collaboration, especially in complex, interdisciplinary environments.

3

DEMAND FOR ENHANCED EFFICIENCY AND ELIMINATION OF REDUNDANCIES**Theme from Data:**

Faculty and staff burnout is partly driven by redundant tasks and inefficient workflows.

Recommendation:

Streamline processes to eliminate redundancies, reducing burnout and improving efficiency.

ISU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**Goal 2: Strengthening Programmatic Excellence - Objective 2.2: Improve efficiency by reducing redundancies.**

Establishing standardized procedures directly contributes to ISU's goal of strengthening programmatic excellence by creating more efficient and reliable administrative functions. Standardized processes reduce variability, minimize errors, and ensure that all departments follow consistent protocols, which improves overall operational efficiency. This alignment supports ISU's objective of developing streamlined processes by allowing administrative staff to perform their duties more effectively, reducing redundancies, and freeing up time for more strategic tasks. As administrative functions become more dependable and uniform, ISU can enhance the quality of service it provides to faculty, students, and other stakeholders, reinforcing its commitment to programmatic excellence.

Goal 4: Expanding Research, Clinical, and Creative Activities - Objective 4.2: Increase productivity by minimizing repetitive tasks, making room for value added work to be done.

Standardized procedures also play a key role in promoting operational consistency, ensuring that all members of the Bengal community—faculty, staff, students, and external partners—experience consistent and high-quality interactions with ISU's administrative teams. When processes are uniform across departments, community members can rely on clear, predictable interactions with the university, fostering trust and satisfaction. This consistency reinforces a sense of reliability and professionalism, contributing to a positive university culture and a strong community bond. By implementing robust standardization, ISU enhances its operational reputation within the Bengal community, making it a dependable and high-quality institution that meets the needs of all stakeholders effectively.

SUPPORTING DATA & CASE STUDIES

- Kotter (1996) underscores the importance of structured change management for process improvements, supporting the recommendation for a change management team.
- Steinhoff et al. (2018) demonstrate that automating repetitive tasks enhances operational efficiency.
- Ruben & De Lisi (2017) reinforce the need for balance between efficiency and compliance, aligning with ISU's goals of process optimization.

4

NEED FOR ROBUST STANDARDIZATION OF PROCESSES**Theme from Data:**

Lack of process standardization creates discrepancies and inefficiencies.

Recommendation:

Establish standardized procedures to ensure consistent and reliable administrative functions.

ISU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**Goal 2: Strengthening Programmatic Excellence - Objective 2.1: Develop streamlined processes.**

Establishing standardized procedures directly contributes to ISU's goal of strengthening programmatic excellence by creating more efficient and reliable administrative functions. Standardized processes reduce variability, minimize errors, and ensure that all departments follow consistent protocols, which improves overall operational efficiency. This alignment supports ISU's objective of developing streamlined processes by allowing administrative staff to perform their duties more effectively, reducing redundancies, and freeing up time for more strategic tasks. As administrative functions become more dependable and uniform, ISU can enhance the quality of service it provides to faculty, students, and other stakeholders, reinforcing its commitment to programmatic excellence.

Goal 5: Energizing the Bengal Community - Objective 5.4: Promote operational consistency.

Standardized procedures also play a key role in promoting operational consistency, ensuring that all members of the Bengal community—faculty, staff, students, and external partners—experience consistent and high-quality interactions with ISU's administrative teams. When processes are uniform across departments, community members can rely on clear, predictable interactions with the university, fostering trust and satisfaction. This consistency reinforces a sense of reliability and professionalism, contributing to a positive university culture and a strong community bond. By implementing robust standardization, ISU enhances its operational reputation within the Bengal community, making it a dependable and high-quality institution that meets the needs of all stakeholders effectively.

SUPPORTING DATA & CASE STUDIES

- Senge (2006) and EDUCAUSE (2020) both highlight the importance of standardization to improve organizational coherence.
- Maçaneiro et al. (2012), Molnar (2020), and Gerring (2007) emphasize standardized processes as a foundation for operational reliability.

5

SIGNIFICANCE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**Theme from Data:**

Gaps in communication and training prevent optimal staff performance.

Recommendation:

Centralize training within the matrix structure to address skill gaps and support continuous development.

ISU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Goal 2: Strengthening Programmatic Excellence - Objective 2.1: Centralizing training within the matrix structure will directly contribute to strengthening programmatic excellence by enhancing the skills and capabilities of administrative staff.

This consistent approach ensures a well-prepared workforce, enabling effective support for faculty and departments. By investing in continuous training, ISU not only addresses current skill gaps but also proactively prepares staff for future demands, fulfilling Objective 2.1's focus on faculty and staff development. Efficient, consistent administrative processes allow faculty to focus on academic priorities, bolstering ISU's ability to deliver quality support services.

Goal 5: Energizing the Bengal Community - Objective 5.2: Increase engagement through training opportunities.

Expanding training opportunities for administrative staff fosters a culture where employees feel valued and engaged, aligning with Goal 5's emphasis on energizing the Bengal community. Centralized training under the matrix structure provides targeted, relevant development, fostering personal and professional growth. Strengthened staff capabilities make ISU a reliable partner for the external community, enhancing its reputation as a stable, collaborative institution. By embedding training within the matrix structure, ISU not only builds internal capacity but also reinforces its role as a cornerstone for community relationships and partnerships.

SUPPORTING DATA & CASE STUDIES

- Bland et al. (2009) highlight structured mentoring's role in enhancing career development.
- Winter & McCann (2022) and ASAP Reports (2023, 2024) underscore the impact of continuous training on job satisfaction and engagement and retention.



6

PRIORITY FOR LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

Theme from Data:

Limited use of technology restricts secure, efficient data management and data centralization for administrative support services.

Recommendation:

Strengthen the partnership between administrative support services and ITS to fully utilize secure, integrated platforms for streamlined workflows.

ISU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Goal 4: Expanding Research, Clinical, and Creative Activities - Objective 4.2: Increase productivity in research, scholarly, and creative activities.

Administrative support services, as the primary users of ISU's data systems, are integral to ensuring accurate, secure data management that supports the university's research mission. Collaborating with ITS as the subject matter experts (SMEs), administrative support services can implement existing tools more effectively to enhance data security, accessibility, and accuracy. This partnership empowers the administrative team to better support cross-disciplinary research through streamlined data access, fostering an environment conducive to compliance and comprehensive reporting. By optimizing available resources in close coordination with ITS, administrative support services can facilitate timely and accurate data for grant applications and research projects, supporting ISU's research goals without overhauling current infrastructure.

Goal 2: Strengthening Programmatic Excellence - Objective 2.3: Enhance ISU's infrastructure.

A centralized, standardized data management approach—driven by administrative support services in partnership with ITS—can improve data control, accuracy, and decision-making while enhancing operational efficiency. By maximizing the potential of existing platforms, administrative support teams gain reliable, secure data access that enhances reporting capabilities, meets compliance requirements, and aligns with ISU's strategic objectives. Working with ITS as the expert consultants, administrative support services can implement cost-effective technology solutions that meet their specific needs and strengthen the university's reputation for excellence in programmatic and operational infrastructure.

SUPPORTING DATA & CASE STUDIES

- EDUCAUSE (2020) and Gartner (2021) underscore the importance of both data security and effective use of existing resources as part of higher education's digital transformation.
- Galligan et al. (2020) and Steinhoff et al. (2018) emphasize automation as a crucial factor in enhancing data integrity and minimizing human error..
- Stroud (2021) supports the role of automation in consistent, accurate data management.

7

SIGNIFICANCE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**Theme from Data:**

Misalignment between roles and lack of career progression contributes to dissatisfaction.

Recommendation:

Establish clear career ladders and succession planning within the matrix structure.

ISU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**Goal 2: Strengthening Programmatic Excellence - Objective 2.1: Retain outstanding staff.**

Establishing clear career ladders and succession planning within the matrix structure directly supports the objective of retaining outstanding staff by providing them with defined pathways for professional growth. When staff see opportunities for advancement and understand the steps needed to progress, they are more likely to feel motivated, valued, and committed to the organization. Succession planning also ensures continuity of expertise, as qualified internal candidates are prepared to fill essential roles as they become available. This structured approach to career development not only improves individual job satisfaction but also strengthens ISU's administrative workforce, supporting overall programmatic excellence. By investing in well-defined career paths, ISU can attract and retain high-quality talent, creating a stable, skilled team that supports the university's long-term goals.

Goal 5: Energizing the Bengal Community - Objective 5.4: Foster a supportive environment.

Creating structured career ladders and succession planning fosters a supportive environment that energizes the Bengal community by promoting growth, recognition, and stability. When employees know that ISU is invested in their development and that their contributions are valued, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and purpose within the community. This approach reinforces a culture of mutual support, where employees see their career goals as aligned with the university's mission. A structured career path within a matrix structure also builds a network of engaged, capable staff who are committed to the university's success and can support each other in their professional journeys. This supportive environment strengthens the Bengal community by fostering loyalty, morale, and a collaborative spirit, making ISU an attractive workplace for current and prospective employees.

SUPPORTING DATA & CASE STUDIES

- Bland et al. (2009) highlight structured mentoring's role in enhancing career development.
- Winter & McCann (2022) and ASAP Reports (2023, 2024) underscore the impact of continuous training on job satisfaction and engagement and retention.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The proposed matrix reporting structure offers a transformative approach for Idaho State University, addressing critical operational themes uncovered in survey data and aligning with all facets of ISU's Strategic Plan 2023-2027. The recommendation systematically addresses the challenges of inconsistent service delivery, administrative inefficiencies, and inadequate training and career development opportunities, offering a structured, sustainable solution.

Next Steps

To implement the matrix structure effectively, the next recommended action is to establish a change management team that will lead the transition, facilitate training, and address any operational challenges. This team will guide the phased implementation of the matrix model, ensuring alignment with ISU's strategic goals and addressing each of the identified themes with a clear, structured approach. By building on this foundation, ISU will achieve a sustainable administrative structure that fosters both organizational resilience and staff satisfaction, contributing to the university's long-term success and growth.

What is our
PATH?

THE MATRIX REPORTING STRUCTURE ALIGNS SEAMLESSLY WITH ISU'S STRATEGIC GOALS, CONTRIBUTING TO A ROBUST FRAMEWORK FOR UNIVERSITY GROWTH.

Goal 1: Student Access, Opportunity, Retention, and Success –

The matrix model enhances student experience by creating reliable, consistent administrative support that directly contributes to ISU's retention objectives. Students benefit from streamlined services that reduce wait times, provide accurate information, and ensure access to the resources needed for their success. This consistency and dependability across ISU's administrative services contribute to a supportive environment where students feel prioritized, fostering engagement and retention as they navigate their academic journeys.

Goal 2: Strengthening Programmatic Excellence –

By emphasizing efficiency, process standardization, and skill development, the matrix structure directly supports ISU's commitment to programmatic excellence. Streamlined administrative functions allow for optimal resource allocation and reduce variability across departments, enhancing support for faculty and academic programs. This cohesion ensures that ISU's academic offerings and student services are supported by a capable and well-aligned administrative workforce, which strengthens ISU's reputation as a responsive and high-performing institution.

Goal 3: Cultivating External Partnerships –

The matrix model's focus on interdepartmental collaboration positions ISU as a cohesive, resource-sharing institution, making it well-suited to engage with external partners. By establishing strong internal networks, ISU is able to present a unified approach to partnerships with industry, community organizations, and educational institutions. This alignment demonstrates ISU's commitment to community engagement, allowing it to cultivate long-lasting, impactful relationships that benefit students, faculty, and the broader community.

Goal 4: Expanding Research, Clinical, and Creative Activities –

Standardized processes, enhanced data security, and reduced redundancies create an efficient environment conducive to research and innovation. With streamlined administrative support, faculty and staff are better equipped to pursue interdisciplinary research and creative projects without administrative barriers. By fostering operational alignment with research objectives, the matrix structure enables ISU to support innovative projects and collaborative initiatives, advancing ISU's standing in research and creative activities.

Goal 5: Energizing the Bengal Community –

Structured career paths, succession planning, and a focus on professional development within the matrix model foster a positive work environment where employees feel valued and motivated. This supportive culture strengthens ISU's ability to retain talent and build a sense of community among staff, students, and faculty. Additionally, with a cohesive and dependable administrative team, ISU becomes a reliable partner for external organizations, fostering trust and respect. This alignment reinforces ISU's position as a stable, community-focused institution, creating strong, mutually beneficial connections with external stakeholders across the broader Bengal community.

THE MATRIX REPORTING STRUCTURE ADDRESSES THE IDENTIFIED THEMES

Consistency in Service Delivery –

By standardizing roles, responsibilities, and documentation, the matrix structure enhances the reliability and equity of ISU's administrative services. This approach addresses issues of overburdened staff and departmental inconsistencies, establishing a unified framework that is resilient and adaptable to the evolving needs of the university. This consistency directly contributes to a dependable support system for faculty, students, and staff across ISU.

Standardization of Processes –

Robust process standardization ensures that administrative functions across ISU operate reliably and smoothly. This consistency supports ISU's commitment to operational excellence, ensuring that programmatic delivery is enhanced and administrative experiences are positive and predictable. Standardized processes create a stable foundation for efficient service, reinforcing ISU's reputation for excellence.

Collaboration and Interdepartmental Support –

The matrix structure promotes seamless collaboration across departments, breaking down silos and fostering a culture of shared resources and support. This cross-departmental integration strengthens ISU's internal networks, enhancing operational coherence and collective progress. As a result, the university can more effectively pool resources and expertise, ensuring smoother, unified operations.

Training and Development –

The matrix model supports centralized training programs that target administrative roles, closing communication gaps and empowering staff with essential skills. This investment in development helps ISU maintain high standards and aligns with its emphasis on programmatic and staff excellence. By equipping staff to perform effectively, ISU fosters an environment that values continuous improvement and skill growth.

Efficiency and Redundancy Reduction –

By streamlining processes and automating repetitive tasks, the proposed structure helps reduce burnout and workload strain on faculty and staff. This heightened efficiency aligns with ISU's strategic goals to maximize resource utilization and supports a healthier work environment. With redundant tasks minimized, resources are redirected toward high-impact initiatives that advance ISU's core objectives.

Leveraging Technology –

Administrative Support Services collaborating with ITS within the matrix structure ensures that data security and technological resources are effectively managed. By minimizing manual data processes and promoting technological integration, ISU protects sensitive information and strengthens data management capabilities. This alignment with secure, efficient operations bolsters ISU's commitment to data integrity and strategic growth.

Succession Planning and Career Development –

Establishing clear career paths and succession plans within the matrix framework addresses role alignment and fosters career growth for administrative professionals. This initiative supports ISU's focus on talent retention and community building by creating structured opportunities for development. A clear career pathway contributes to a supportive environment where talent can thrive and progress within the organization.

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