PROJECT 2024

Exceptionalism and accountability

Goals: to save time, increase collaboration, and to empower staff and faculty to execute, their duties and to hold people accountable for following policies, procedures, and deadlines.

Outcomes: Attacking the more irksome effects of how we do business promises to increase efficiency and trust.

I. The issues

In Year 1 and 2 conversations, participants expressed concerns about a) the weight of procedures and rules; b) an apparent indifference to deadlines on the part of students as well as faculty; c) exceptionalism; d) uncertainty about who makes decisions and why.

They saw some reports as overly complex and/or inconsequential, and they found layers of approval to be time-consuming and disempowering.

Failure to observe deadlines costs staff time and leads to appeals for exceptions. One missed deadline can affect others within and across offices, multiplying its impact.

Staff find that others get around policies and rules or appeal to supervisors to make exceptions. They report getting overruled too often.

Conversations with Cabinet and with the senior leadership collaborative suggested addressing these broader "cultural" issues with efforts in three specific areas: observing deadlines, limiting reports, and streamlining approvals.

Cabinet then discussed proposals for action in each of these areas. Their response follows.

II. Proposal

The proposal outlines actions to address communication needs and operational principles related to deadlines, simplification of reports, and streamlining processes such as approvals.

Deadlines:

When establishing deadlines, offices should consider the timing needs to address workflow efficiency, legal requirements, and college policies. Communication should convey the rationale of the timeline and consequences of missing deadlines. Clear communication along with ample reminders should increase consistency in processes and minimize the need for exceptions.

Reporting information:

Offices will review reporting processes to simplify and streamline. The goal is to reduce reporting burden and explore opportunities for automation.

Processes/workflows with multiple levels of approvals:

Simplify approval processes, automate when possible, to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

Actions already launched:

An administrative process review is ongoing, and its findings will inform how to streamline and implement existing and modified processes.

Ongoing explorations into automating processes, reports, and approvals will reduce manual reporting and generate automatic reminders in complicated multi-step processes that are deadline/time-sensitive. The development of new processes will include input from users to ensure user-friendliness and meet the needs of all stakeholders.