

Identifying the Opportunities for University Transformation

A Work Activity Assessment Case Study



North Carolina State University (N.C. State) sought to conduct an FTE inventory of its 2,000 staff members in the functional areas of human resources, finance, purchasing, procurement, budgeting, and contracts and grants. As one of the top three research universities in the Triangle, it employs nearly 2,400 faculty and 5,600 staff members. The university enrolls approximately 35,000 students and grants around 5,000 bachelor degrees, 1,800 masters' degrees, and 500 doctoral degrees annually.

N.C. State's vice chancellor for finance and business chartered a team to consolidate decentralized, unit-based transaction processing into regional business operations centers (BOCs). The goal of restructuring business operations was to improve institutional effectiveness and strengthen N.C. State's culture of service by ensuring that academic support activities and business practices are efficient, responsive, and cost effective. This project involved conducting an FTE inventory to ascertain who performs the functional area activities and the level of effort (FTEs) employed to complete that work. A broad cross-section of participants were surveyed, as listed in Figure 1.

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ScottMadden was to collaborate with the project team and stakeholders across the campus to refine a list of activities in each functional area, determine the appropriate list of participants, and coordinate survey administration. ScottMadden would use

its proprietary survey tool to determine where, how much, by whom, and at what cost work activities in these functions were performed across campus. The ScottMadden team would then provide an analysis of opportunities based on leading practices and benchmarks.

The Challenge

Like similar institutions, N.C. State wanted to reduce work and reallocate resources by standardizing policies and processes across units and to consolidate transactional and administrative activities into BOCs.

This consolidation would enable the university to pool financial resources to further automate newly standardized processes across the campus. The BOCs could cross-train employees with narrower portfolios of responsibilities to provide services across multiple organizations and automate service and knowledge management to better enable service providers. Further, the new model would reduce risks associated with employee retirements.

Many and various employees in units across the campus performed activities in these functions. The university and ScottMadden's challenge was to identify the right employees to participate in the FTE inventory and determine the right set of activities on which to collect information.

Additionally, the very act of collecting information was likely and, in fact, did create questions about motivations and intent of the effort. Employees were likely to feel threatened by what would be perceived as intrusive data collection.

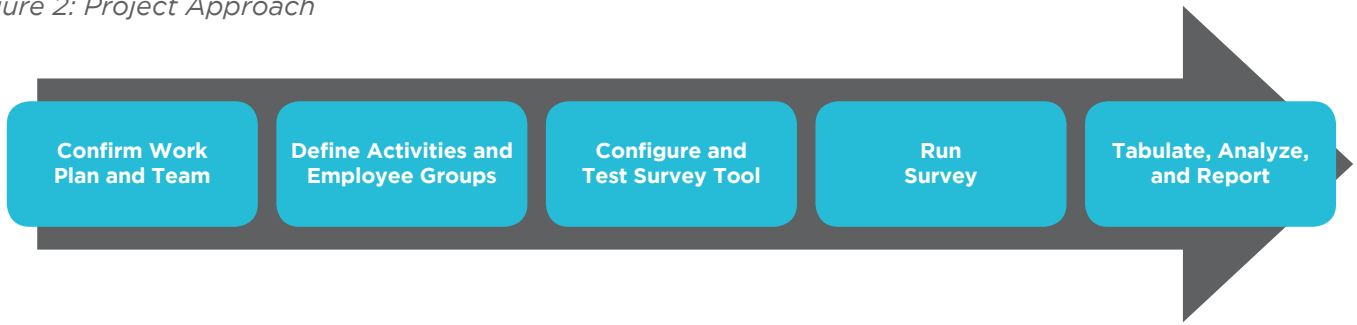
How We Helped

ScottMadden leveraged its deep experience working with Fortune 500 companies and government entities to work with the business operations realignment steering team to design, configure, deploy, and tabulate a survey of work activities accomplished by selected staff across the campus. The survey aimed to capture the

Figure 1: Survey Participants



Figure 2: Project Approach



percentage of time individuals dedicated to activities associated with targeted functions. The project approach involved five steps as shown in Figure 2 above. Once deployed, the ScottMadden team issued test sessions for three separate groups, allowing for adjustment to the activity wording and questions prior to full deployment. E-mail invitations were then released with a deadline, while information sessions were administered across campus to assist others in completing the survey. After 300 survey respondents were collected, a series of reminders and follow-up by the lead finance and business contacts in each college and division encouraged further participation. Next, ScottMadden joined the survey data with organizational and wage/salary data to calculate the costs of tasks by organization at the various levels. Then, ScottMadden delineated the nature of the work performed, specifically transactional activities in each function. Once the data collected was reviewed, the survey was re-opened for a brief period to capture final responses and to add details where there were gaps.

Results

By delivering clear, repetitive communication and conducting a pilot with contacts across the campus, the team achieved a 95.8% survey response rate. This response rate ensured high confidence in the results, which were compelling.

ScottMadden confirmed that decentralized units expended approximately 68% of effort representing more than \$23 million to perform transactional and administrative functions (as summarized

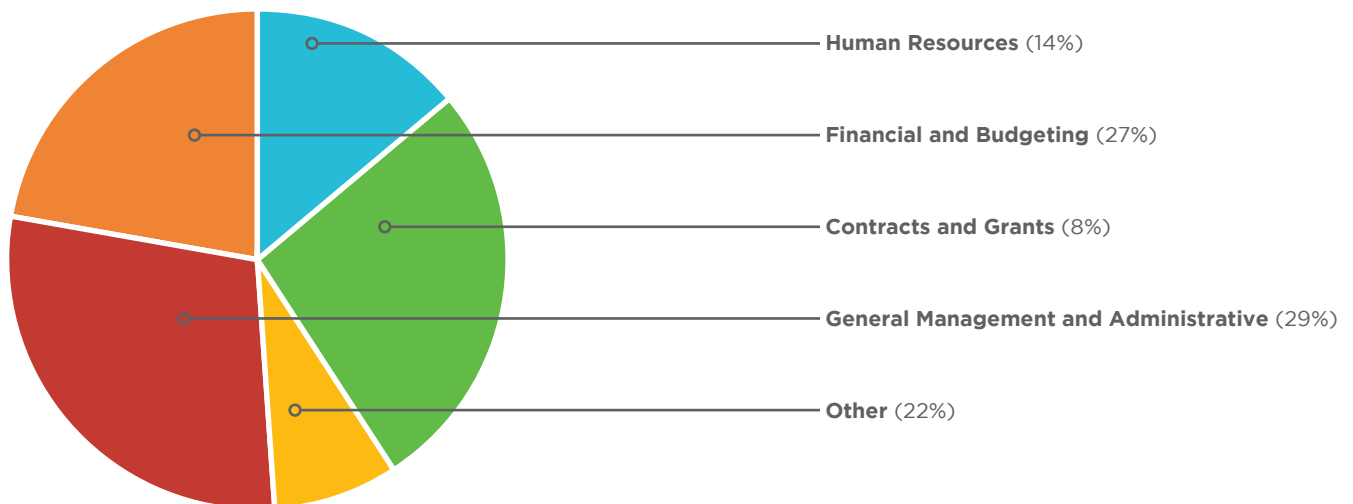
in Figure 3) and 21% of effort representing approximately \$9 million on functional/specialist work. This meant potentially 79% of the FTEs of effort could be suitable for the BOCs.

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With the depth and breadth of the information provided by ScottMadden, N.C. State continued its more detailed planning for the number, scope, and location of BOCs. The university will certainly continue to see significant cost reductions and improved efficiency.

Don Patty, assistant dean for finance for the College of Natural Resources, chair and interim director of business operations, and overall project leader, said, “The data does support what we had assumed. It just affirms that what we are trying to accomplish makes sense and is the right direction to head.”

Figure 3: FTE Breakdown by Function



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