

From: Daniel Diermeier, Provost
To: University Faculty and Staff
Date: February 6, 2017
Subject: Update on administrative modernization and shared services

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to provide a quarterly update on the work we have undertaken towards modernizing our administrative functions and developing additional shared administrative services at the University of Chicago.

Over the past eighteen months, we have taken a close look at a number of administrative services at the University, particularly in the areas of human resources, procurement, finance, and research administration. Staff members with extensive knowledge of the relevant administrative functions participated in [working groups](#) to document current processes and contribute to proposals for modifications. A [faculty working group](#) has been reviewing proposals and advising on potential updates and changes. Faculty and staff input, provided through forums and other discussions, has highlighted points of concern and opportunities for improvements.

One result of the review and faculty input is that Research Administration will continue to be examined on a separate path from other administrative areas, and in greater depth, with a focus on improving and enhancing services. This work will be led by Eric Isaacs, Executive Vice President for Research, whose office oversees University Research Administration.

For the other areas of the project -- human resources, procurement, and finance -- we will present additional information on proposed updates and changes to administrative processes and request your input in the coming months. First, we will be working with Deans and other administrative leaders in the schools and divisions to examine possible updates and changes to area processes in the context of individual units. Second, in March and April we will host a second set of faculty and staff forums. In those meetings we will share specific information on proposed updates and changes, and would value your feedback.

Beyond the scope of this project, it is clear that faculty members remain concerned about the increase in administrative burden on their scholarship and teaching. Input from faculty has amplified and extended the findings from the Faculty Committee on the Quality of Academic Life and their 2012 report, "[Making Time for Faculty](#)," that the administrative burden on faculty is too high and greater attention needs to be paid to how University policies impact faculty time and work, and how such burdens can be reduced. To that end, a new faculty committee will be formed to build on the work of the Faculty Committee on the Quality of Academic Life. Its purpose will be to review rules and processes that faculty raise as onerous or outdated, and look for opportunities to simplify, change, clarify, or eliminate them.

Finally, our reviews over these past months have consistently highlighted the important contributions made by University staff. The institutional knowledge provided by staff has been, and will continue to be a critical element of administrative modernization, and we look forward to working with our staff members to provide more effective support and resources to carry out their duties. We will also be looking for new ways to recognize outstanding staff members, and provide opportunities for career development.

As always, we welcome your feedback, and the opportunity to discuss these matters further. Members of my office are also available to attend meetings with faculty and other groups, or to meet individually with concerned members of the University community. Requests for meetings or input on this project can be emailed to sharedservicesinput@uchicago.edu.