Campus Budget/Finance Meeting Notes

The meeting conducted on Monday, August 25, 2008 in SBS 405 featured campus stakeholders involved in various budget and finance activities. The meeting was held to discuss and begin a dialogue for a variety of concerns that were experienced over time, which was leading to a heightened level of frustration and lack of information experienced by campus budget analysts. The document, “Concerns with the Finance Module of Peoplesoft,” was reviewed as a centerpiece for our discussion and should also be considered as a resource to identify specific opportunities listed therein.

Everyone in attendance promoted an excellent example of coming together to discuss and share needs and expectations. I commend everyone for their participation and look forward to a continued structure of our dialogue together. I believe everyone in attendance wants to have better communication and to work toward mutually beneficial outcomes as we move forward.

The consensus from most attendees indicated Financial Services managers should resume meeting at regular intervals with the campus budget analysts, at least monthly, in order to maintain better communication and have a venue of formal communication in place. This will allow the group to work on the opportunities identified in this document, as well as “Concerns with the Finance Module of Peoplesoft” list.

This summary lists the opportunities to improve communication and procedures, which were identified from this initial meeting. If, after review of this summary list, you wish to add an item, please contact me via email [Phillip.Rouse@humboldt.edu] and I will add your item to this list of opportunities. This list can be used at the next monthly meeting to review and prioritize activities for the group to begin working on this year.

Opportunity Items: (Not listed in any specific order)

1. Budget Analysts need a clearly defined process to get help in matters relating to budget and finance.
   a. Currently no listing of which person is to handle which type of issue or problem.
2. Development of a “One-Stop” web resource for campus budget analysts.
   a. This page would include:
      i. Help Process and contacts for issues
      ii. Calendars and deadline information for finance & budget
      iii. News and updates on changes to processes, procedures, and deadlines
      iv. Agendas and Notes from monthly meetings
      v. Clarification of/Dictionary of financial terms and/or chartfield strings.
      vi. Finance and Budget procedures (i.e. OE Budget Load Instructions/Process)
      vii. Supplemented as needed
3. “Posting Process” needs to be shared with a broader audience (higher than Signature Authority) and timely enough for review.

4. Identify Information and reporting needs by role and level
   a. Establish criteria for which role needs what information (i.e. What information and reports to Deans need to receive? How about the Provost? Department Chairs?)
   b. Work with new Data Warehouse Analyst to provide these reports over time.

5. Improve the Communication Process
   a. Meet monthly to begin working on the opportunities contained in this list
   b. Identify who needs to be informed of changes and develop standards to consistently inform this community of end users.
      i. Which leaders, Department chairs, budget analysts do we need to notify, and when?
      ii. Deans and Budget Analysts must be notified of changes at a minimum.
      iii. Can we develop criteria for communication by role, then build list-serves (or use existing ones) to update people?
      iv. Can this communication facilitate and/or relate to the greater campus discussion and communication on the budget process?
   c. Communicate Monthly Deadlines to key people
      i. What is the best way or preferred method for reminding everyone about the various deadlines?
   d. Communicate Needs to the Chancellor’s Office and request that they consolidate changes for initiation at the beginning of the fiscal year, as opposed to rolling out changes in the middle or throughout the year.
      i. This would allow us all to engage changes more effectively and change our business processes once a year.
      ii. Also improve how we notify campus of “pending” changes proposed by the CO, so they are informed in advance.
   e. “Communicating Trust Account Moves” proactively to Deans, Analysts, and Directors.
      i. Improve the process and work to adjust timelines/annual calendar so this may be more predictive.
   f. A clearly defined “help resource.” (See item 1 on the list).

6. Develop Entry Standards for most pertinent fields
   a. Identify fields that impact reporting the most and work to standardize entry for these fields. (This will help improve data accuracy in the long run.)

7. Develop Mutually Beneficial Deadlines
   a. Balance campus needs with Financial Service needs and agree on deadlines that facilitate the process and keep communication open.
   b. Develop a holistic Annual Timeline/Calendar that keeps previous item (a) in mind.
      i. For example, establishing a process and “window” to conduct “Budget Transfers that is less-restrictive and understood by all.
8. Review and Improve the OE Budget Load process.
   a. Is there a more efficient way to conduct this process?
9. Develop a Solution for Temporary Staff who currently have no “Class Code” in Peoplesoft.
10. Train and Utilize on the Peoplesoft “Department Tree” which can be leveraged to inform users of any activity conducted in their “Department Code.” (suggested by Dave Rowe)

I want to thank you all for meeting and opening a needed dialogue to improve communication and procedures relating to the work you do each day. As with any system, improvements are not made “all at once,” but by the constant application of scrutiny to specific services and processes, and how those processes affect all stakeholders involved. I look forward to seeing the establishment of a monthly meeting to prioritize and complete improvements to the items on this document.

Sincerely,

Phillip Rouse

HSU Quality Improvement Facilitator