



Auburn University Efficiency Task Force Report

July 2011

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Executive Summary

Following several months of meetings with representatives from the campus community and a careful review of comments and suggestions submitted, the Auburn University Efficiency Task Force has completed its initial work and recommended changes and next steps for the procedures and practices that guide the application of current and future institutional policies.

The Auburn University Efficiency Task Force was charged with identifying ways of improving the general efficiency and effectiveness of the institution's operations. Some of the task force recommendations correspond with the institution's continuing efforts to advance its Strategic Plan, and others are a direct response to continued state budget reductions. Specifically, the task force has identified ways of (1) improving policies, procedures, processes and/or practices that could be revised, simplified, eliminated or established to improve efficiencies/effectiveness and better meet the needs of the Auburn University faculty, staff, and students; (2) improving the communications and marketing of new policies, initiatives, and procedures among the university community; and (3) improving coordination among Auburn University's administration and the various academic and operating units, organizations, and affiliates. In its efforts to develop a model of effectiveness, the task force has also identified opportunities for potentially reducing costs, streamlining processes, and building upon existing campus efficiency initiatives.

Through preliminary discussions with faculty and staff and benchmarking efficiency efforts at peer institutions, the task force identified five key areas of emphasis. These areas include: (1) academic efficiencies, (2) business support services, (3) communications and marketing, (4) facilities and support services, and (5) information technology systems. Members of the campus community were asked to provide comments and ideas to the task force to be explored, discussed, and prioritized by each sub-committee in an effort to identify potential recommendations. Feedback continues to be solicited from the university community in the form of focus groups, open forums, online submissions, and interviews.

An integral part of the task force's work has involved careful analysis of ongoing efficiency measures implemented among the units within both the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Executive Vice President during the 2010 and 2011 academic years. Although the attached list of budget cuts and efficiencies for Auburn University and Auburn University Montgomery (Appendix B) does not represent a comprehensive list of all units and efficiency strategies, it does represent the extent to which many of the units have reorganized and simplified procedures to save costs or reallocate resources on both campuses.

The following report offers several recommendations for quick action regarding ongoing issues with existing campus policies, practices, and procedures. The report also offers opportunities for further analysis and recommendations in areas that will require more time to successfully implement. A summary of ongoing efficiency efforts and budget reductions that have been undertaken by both academic and non-academic units to increase the overall effectiveness of the institution is also included.

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Introduction

In response to recent budget reductions and Auburn University's desire to become a more efficient institution, the Efficiency Task Force was established in January 2011 to identify strategies for streamlining many of the campus operations in an effort to create a more efficient campus environment for its faculty, staff, and students.

The task force charge given by former Provost Mary Ellen Mazey was to identify opportunities to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of operations among the broad areas of academics, business support services, communications and marketing, facilities and support services, and information technology systems. The Task Force solicited suggestions and comments from the campus community regarding ways to improve the general efficiency and effectiveness of the institution, along with suggestions for reducing costs and saving time in areas throughout campus.

The task force began its work by developing a set of guiding principles to be used as each working group drafted recommendations. The members identified five major sub-committees and, following the requests for suggestions from the campus community, compiled approximately 82 efficiency recommendations. Feedback was obtained from faculty, staff, and students across campus through the use of an online submission website, focus groups, and interviews with representatives of various stakeholder groups. Each sub-committee met to discuss and analyze the feedback and drafted recommendations following discussions and subsequent meetings with additional campus representatives.

Recommendations were drafted and, where possible, estimated cost savings were provided (a summary of all comments submitted to the sub-committees is provided in Appendix C). Several comments were submitted that exceed the immediate scope of the task force. These comments are included in Appendix C, and the task force recommends that a separate ad hoc committee be established to take them under consideration. The following section contains 34 major recommendations and 48 secondary recommendations. It is important to consider that many of the recommendations provided do not necessarily contain projected cost savings, but rather present improved operational efficiencies and services.

Guiding Principles

The goal of the Auburn University Efficiency Task Force is to recommend ways of improving the general efficiency and effectiveness of our institution's operations by identifying the following:

1. Any policies, procedures, processes, and/or practices that could be revised, simplified, eliminated, or created, to improve efficiencies/effectiveness in an effort to better meet the needs of the Auburn University faculty, staff, and students;
2. Opportunities to improve the communications and marketing of new policies, initiatives, and procedures among the university community;
3. Opportunities for better coordination between Auburn University's administration and the academic and non-academic operating units, organizations, and affiliates.

Ongoing Efficiency Efforts

Despite the decline in state-appropriated resources in recent academic years, Auburn University has identified many innovative strategies to ensure the institution upholds the high standards and quality of its academic programs, research endeavors, and outreach efforts. While the institution has always upheld efforts to decrease costs and improve policies and procedures, many campus units have compensated for recent funding deficiencies by identifying strategies designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of procedural operations. These strategies have resulted in streamlined processes and better use of funds and resource allocation.

Earlier this year, academic and auxiliary units were asked to provide their efficiency strategies to demonstrate how they contain costs to operate more effectively. Combined permanent salary and maintenance cuts for FY 2010 and FY 2011 among many of the academic units and many auxiliary departments, along with self-reported efficiency strategies, total nearly \$35 million (Appendix A). Although these figures are not exhaustive of all of the institution's areas, the efficiency information provided illustrates how these units are resourcefully coping with budgetary restraints (Appendix B). This information was compiled in an effort to engage the campus in a greater dialogue regarding efficiency, and also contributes to the efforts and recommendations of the Efficiency Task Force (later established in spring 2011).

As stated, multiple units have participated in the ongoing effort to increase efficiency as the institution adjusts to decreased resources resulting from budget reductions. A summary of the combined permanent salary and maintenance reduction for the past two fiscal years is provided in Appendix B.

Implemented Efficiencies

During 2010 and 2011, the Provost's Office and the Office of the Executive Vice President authorized the implementation of several new programs designed to enhance the efficiency of policies or procedures that effectively impact the campus. Units initiated these efforts in response to growing concerns over issues of increasing undergraduate student enrollment, decreases in funding, duplication of efforts across various departments, the increasing need for many of the university processes to become paperless, and a general desire to streamline and simplify several existing practices. Major efficiency efforts currently being undertaken include:

- **Implementation of Ad Astra software:** Purchased in 2010, Ad Astra software has enabled the institution to identify and more efficiently schedule instructional space. Prior to this, classroom scheduling was accomplished using an in-house database maintained by one individual within the Registrar's Office. Due to continued enrollment demand on lower-division core courses, a space inventory was conducted to prepare for the implementation of Ad Astra. Using this inventory and historical course demand, courses are now assigned to "right sized" classrooms to allow for maximum capacity and more efficient use of academic spaces.
- **Efficiency of the University Promotion and Tenure Committee:** Beginning in 2010, the process of the University Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Committee determinations was modified to save both resources and faculty time. Prior to this, promotion and tenure decisions were very time and resource intensive, due to the need for multiple copies of each candidate's tenure packet being made for each member of the P&T Committee (an annual average of 55 tenure packets exceeding 100 pages each for approximately 15 committee members), and several day-long sessions were reserved to review each individual case. To bring greater efficiency to this process, all tenure packets are now posted to a secured website for committee members, and a preliminary vote is taken among all committee members. A formal vote is taken for those cases that are unanimous, and a thorough discussion takes place for all other cases.

The revised process saves the institution from making paper copies that have to be later shredded, and also saves faculty time.

- **Implementation of Digital Measures for reporting faculty activity:** Auburn University is currently implementing Digital Measures software to streamline the process of faculty annual evaluations. Digital Measures enables the institution to maintain faculty information and credentials for each course taught in a central location that is easily accessible. Ensuring the accuracy of this information is increasingly important as the institution prepares for its SACS reaffirmation in 2013.
- **Implementation of Degree Works:** DegreeWorks is a web-based tool designed to help students and advisors monitor a student's progress toward degree completion. DegreeWorks is designed to support academic advising through combining Auburn University's degree requirements and a student's coursework completed into a unique format that enables students to visualize those courses completed towards degree requirements, and what courses remain. The system will also enable students to view degree requirements if they are interested in changing majors, and see courses that do/do not transfer.
- **Redesign of Camp War Eagle:** In summer 2011, the Office of First Year Programs transitioned its summer orientation program for incoming freshmen from eight three-day sessions to 10 two-day sessions. The modified schedule is designed to more efficiently meet the needs of incoming students and family members by shortening the duration. The modified schedule also creates smaller session attendance, allowing for more quality time with academic advisors and peer counselors. In addition, the schedule has been revised to allow academic advisors more efficient use of their time with students and parents (an average of 5,000 parents and family members attend the sessions). More frequent and shorter sessions also enable the university to more efficiently utilize campus facilities, creating a less crowded and more comfortable atmosphere.
- **Implementation of PeopleAdmin 7 for Academic Positions:** The Office of the Provost is currently automating the effect faculty recruitment and selection process to substantial savings over heavily paper and labor intensive procedures currently in place. These savings will be realized through expansion of the on-line application and employment management process implemented by University Human Resources for non-faculty recruitment and selection in 2002. Human Resources engaged People Admin, a vendor specializing in technology solutions for the higher education market, to convert paper employment management processes for non-faculty employees to an electronic system. This resulted in the elimination of a full time staff position dedicated to manual applicant flow data entry and copying approximately 9-10,000 applications per year for distribution to hiring departments and search committees. The on-line faculty employment process will leverage existing technology and will not require a separate module purchase from the vendor. In addition to automating the employment process, the Provost's Office and Human Resources are collaborating to reduce recruitment advertising costs through a centralized recruitment process initiated by Human Resources in 2007. This process allows the University to realize significant savings through economies of scale with frequently used advertising outlets, in addition to enhancing the image of the University through branding consistency.
- **Pooled Fringe Benefit Rates:** Beginning in 2010, the Business Office initiated the practice of budgeting and expensing employee benefits with federally negotiated and approved pooled fringe benefit rates. A best practice at most research universities, the fringe rates provide for better costing of benefits, realizing savings to the base budgets of over \$3.5 million in the first year of implementation. As benefit costs increase, the savings each year will increase

proportionally. The rates also provide for more effective and defensible budgeting, particularly on sponsored agreements.

- **Strategic Sourcing Initiatives:** Beginning in 2009 and ongoing, the Business Office has studied commodities and services of high dollar expense and developed strategies for bidding and negotiating contracts associated with these purchases and services. Emphasis has been on maximizing economies of scale with high volume discounts, obtaining funds for scholarships, negotiating upfront payments and rebates and obtaining better compliance with Alabama Competitive Bid Law. Contracts for office supplies, scientific supplies, computer equipment and peripherals, and vehicle rental are examples of such contracts.

- **Electronic Processing and Paper Elimination Initiatives:** Over the past two years and ongoing, the Business Office has led numerous initiatives centered on electronic processing that impact all divisions, colleges and schools, and administrative units of the University. Such efforts include the in-house development of an effort certification system, whereby quarterly certification of salary and wages is entered, approved and reported via a complex system. Besides the efficiencies afforded in the system, this was an area of compliance risk to the university. Another example is the ongoing campus-wide implementation of Kronos, an electronic timekeeping and leave management system. Processing of e-vouchers and expense reimbursements has begun implementation.

Efficiency Task Force Recommendations

Through the sub-committees, the task force was able to provide 82 recommendations that identify opportunities for enhanced overall efficiencies and potential cost saving strategies. While some of the recommendations may result in immediate cost savings, the majority require further analysis and discussion to determine their overall value from both fiscal and practical perspectives. Some recommendations require time for additional discussion and implementation, while others can be executed quickly and require few or no resources. Many of the recommendations specify that further examination by the most appropriate stakeholders is necessary before they can be acted upon. Over the next few months, it is expected that the campus would initiate additional work groups or an implementation committee to explore these options further and report back with suggested plans for implementation.

Academic Sub-Committee

Key Issues Addressed and Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Examine course scheduling practices and assess whether changes to the block scheduling system for first-year undergraduate students could improve fill-rates for key courses.

Discussion: To better accommodate the demands on undergraduate core courses and take advantage of Ad Astra, a possible technique to improve the efficiency and utilization of classroom space includes the possible use of block scheduling for freshmen students.

- 1.1 Review and analyze the existing scheduling policies (Registrar's Office), departmental scheduling practices, the needs of students and faculty, and what, if any, physical constraints are imposed by limited classroom utilization.
- 1.2 Solicit the views of students, faculty, and staff and identify what recommendations (if any) are desirable.

Recommendation 2: Improve the enrollment management process by establishing enrollment and retention targets for each college and school through a collaboration between Enrollment Services and the academic schools and colleges.

Discussion: In an effort to improve the six-year graduation rate and continue to manage capacity issues beyond the freshmen year, better communication is needed among the Office of Enrollment Services and the colleges and schools.

- 2.1 Establish enrollment targets and retention goals for each college.

Recommendation 3: Require the use of the SARS scheduling software package in all colleges and schools.

Discussion: Management of advising offices across the colleges and schools is incompatible, and greater consistency is needed to ensure an easier transition among students who transfer from one college to another. SARS, now available centrally through the Office of Information Technology, provides a unique structure for setting student appointments, tracking walk-in visits, and maintaining advisor schedules.

- 3.1 Demonstrate the advantages of using SARS to enhance academic advising for faculty advisors within the colleges.

Recommendation 4: Convert the approval of transient registration forms from a paper to an electronic process.

Discussion: Students who take courses at other institutions are required to complete a transient registration form. The current process for obtaining a transient form requires students to complete several visits to their advising office to

obtain and submit the form, upon which they must submit the form to the Registrar's Office. Since these forms are only needed by the transient institutions, and students often decide not to use them, it would save more time and energy for both the student and the advisor to make the form available electronically. Many of our peer institutions have existing software in place as a tool for students and advisors.

4.1 Establish a database for students to access courses that have already been articulated from peer institutions with the state to save students and advisors time seeking out existing information.

Recommendation 5: Expand the scope of the University Ombuds Office to serve students as well as faculty and staff.

Discussion: Students who experience issues they are not comfortable discussing with faculty, department heads/chairs, or Associate Deans should have a resource for listening to issues and advocating for students. Auburn University currently maintains an ombudsman for faculty and staff; however, students are encouraged to take issues up directly with faculty or their academic advisors.

Recommendation 6: With the selection and implementation of a new learning management system, educate faculty that grades posted into the learning management system are secure and can be rolled into Banner.

Discussion: The process of entering grades into Banner is fairly arduous for faculty, many of whom use the grade book feature available in Blackboard. A perception exists among faculty that converting grades from Blackboard into Banner is not possible or not secured, when in fact Blackboard can "post" grades to Banner. There are some technical limitations to transitioning grades from Blackboard into Banner, particularly with regard to the way grades are "rolled" in Banner, and the way grade changes would have to be handled.

Recommendation 7: Expand opportunities for students to interact with faculty.

Discussion: As instruction becomes more efficient in the use of classroom space with the implementation of Ad Astra software, a potential result is the projected increase in class sizes, which could decrease the level of faculty-student interaction. Depending upon the size of the college, some units may not be able to provide smaller class sizes for students to interact and seek career advising from faculty.

7.1 Increase research opportunities for undergraduate students to allow students to spend more time in close contact with their faculty outside of the classroom.

7.2 Encourage the creation of undergraduate research or innovative activities in departments where they do not currently exist.

7.3 Identify possible media outlets to display undergraduate research and other activities among areas where publication may have been limited.

7.4 Explore other creative activities for faculty to engage with students, such as professional societies, book clubs, speakers, etc.

Recommendation 8: Identify more group study areas for students in academic buildings.

Discussion: Student feedback indicated that existing study space in the library is inadequate and overcrowded. Students will often locate empty classrooms or other existing space throughout campus. The Learning Commons

provides unique features that students would like to see mimicked in other areas around campus, including features such as white boards and space for small and large groups.

8.1 Assess the course inventory to identify where classroom space can be converted into student space during specific times of the day.

Recommendation 9: Convert academic and curriculum review processes currently completed manually to workflow.

Discussion: Although the institution is converting many of its processes from manual to electronic, several processes still require the printing of forms for signature and manual submission. A more consistent document management and curricular workflow is needed for many academic units and committees throughout the university.

9.1 Seek feedback from the Associate Deans, advisors, faculty, and students to create a comprehensive list of academic processes still completed manually.

9.2 Identify which processes can be transitioned to workflow, while requiring minimal resources, and ensure the integrity of each process is maintained.

Business Support Services Sub-Committee

Key Issues Addressed and Recommendations

Recommendation 10: The University should continue its efforts to enhance procurement processes for commodities and services in an effort to simplify procedures, provide cost effectiveness, and allow for increased training.

Discussion: Strategic Sourcing efforts have taken place continually at Auburn University since 2009 with the assistance of an outside consultant. New contracts in high dollar spend commodities have resulted in incentives, scholarship funds, and achieving economies of scale in pricing and better bid law compliance. Commodities include office supplies, computer equipment, computer peripherals, rental cars, scientific supplies, etc. Consultants have trained buyers with the goal to transfer knowledge regarding best practices for strategic sourcing. The purchasing card contract (using consultant assistance), exploring opportunities for enhanced service, better technology, larger rebates, and upfront contract concessions are currently under review. Travel agency, online booking tools, and enhanced repair and maintenance contracts are available for future review.

10.1 Monitor campus satisfaction with processes by developing a mechanism for soliciting feedback from business and HR staff, such as online surveys or regular focus group sessions.

10.2 Develop strategies for enhancing communication with and training of staff regarding issues such as contracts and bid laws, and ensure feedback is reciprocal.

Recommendation 11: Further analyze consultant use in an effort to develop campus guidelines for the hiring, management, and evaluation of outside consultants.

11.1 Establish guidelines and training for how to complete and automate paperwork for hiring consultants.

11.2 Provide virtual training to faculty and staff regarding how to negotiate and manage consulting relationships.

11.3 Investigate the utilization and effectiveness of search firms and other consultants in an effort to enhance quality.

11.4 Establish guidelines on the utilization of search firms to ensure compliance with regulations and policy.
(Guidelines have already been drafted for non-faculty positions.)

Recommendation 12: Revisit the use of PeopleAdmin for faculty and other academic positions not currently utilizing it [ongoing] and explore the integration of PeopleAdmin with Banner HR.

Discussion: Auburn University now utilizes a centralized recruiting model for staff and A&P positions that allows for job advertisements to be consolidated and consistent. This has resulted in significant savings for advertising. The University currently utilizes PeopleAdmin, an electronic system for applications for employment that allows for electronic capture and distribution of application materials to search committee members, electronic processing, and approval of applicants as well as automated AA/EEOC processes.

12.1 Work with OIT to identify a means of integrating PeopleAdmin with Banner HR to avoid duplication of employment information entry upon hire.

Recommendation 13: As Kronos time and leave systems are implemented, ensure the decision-making body includes wide representation of campus constituents. Decisions regarding use of systems should maximize the efficiencies and electronic capabilities.

Discussion: The University's method of capturing biweekly time worked is very paper-based and has resulted in very inefficient payroll practices. For this reason, the University recently contracted with Kronos to extend electronic timekeeping to all of campus. Facilities, Vet Med, and the Library have been users of Kronos. Full implementation is scheduled for 2011. In addition, a component to address leave management will be implemented for all employees in order to provide electronic submission and approval/capture for reporting details not previously captured in the system.

Recommendation 14: Obtain benchmarks for appropriate staffing levels based on the volume of sponsored programs, personnel, financial transactions, etc.

Discussion: Although some institutions have addressed decentralization of financial functions by recommending unit consolidation of financial personnel from departments within schools and colleges to central offices, the task force did not see a need to recommend the same at Auburn at this time. However, an opportunity exists to evaluate the appropriate levels and structure of support at the unit level.

14.1 Use the Facilities and Administrative study (COGR) to demonstrate discrepancies in rates compared to peer institutions.

14.2 Develop tools for analysis that can be shared among colleges and units and identify specific functions that can be done internally.

14.3 Survey and assess effectiveness of training among Financial and HR liaison programs, and use the results to guide program changes.

Recommendation 15: Examine the organizational structure and workload distribution to ensure that all staff is fully utilized and jobs are properly allocated and classified.

15.1 Conduct an analysis of positions through Human Resources in cases where jobs have changed or minimum qualifications need review to ensure that classifications and qualifications are appropriate for the work to be performed.

Recommendation 16: Require mandatory training for all faculty and non-faculty supervisors to ensure that supervisors understand and comply with policies and legal obligations and have the tools they need to be effective managers of human capital.

16.1 Provide greater clarity in how supervisors are defined among academic and non-academic positions.

16.2 Require training in the following high risk legal compliance areas at a minimum: sexual harassment, equal opportunity/affirmative action; and non-discrimination in employment.

Recommendation 17: Further review of the Sponsored Programs and Contracts and Grants Administration pre-awarding and post-awarding process.

Discussion: The potential for duplication of responsibilities exists between the two offices before and after a grant is awarded. To become more efficient, greater interfacing between these units is needed.

Recommendation 18: Automate workflow processes for vendor voucher and travel reimbursement.

Recommendation 19: Automate other Human Resource processes, including performance management, as needed and as resources permit.

Discussion: Although many academic and business units have transitioned to paperless processes, many manual processes remain that should become automated.

Facilities Sub-Committee

Key Issues and Recommendations

Recommendation 20: Establish a policy for identifying and consolidating campus buildings, particularly during the summer months.

Discussion: A prevalent topic among the suggestions received involved sustainability and energy conservation, particularly regarding use of academic buildings during the summer months. The Utilities and Energy Department maintains a database of existing buildings programmed to reduce heating and cooling costs (known as occupied/unoccupied mode) throughout the year to provide an average of 10% cost savings. In keeping with the [Facilities Energy Reduction Plan](#), it is necessary for the administrative and academic units to establish new policies and guidelines for the continued promotion of energy savings.

20.1 Establish a taxonomy for campus building types that will enable Facilities to determine what buildings and labs can be scheduled for unoccupied mode (this would change the individual zone unoccupied set points to a higher temperature in warm months and a lower temperature in cold months). An inventory of facilities and usage during the summer will enable the university to make informed decisions regarding buildings and energy use.

20.2 Establish a policy for building consolidation during the summer months and identify a threshold that would authorize the Provost's Office and the Office of the Executive Vice President to request building occupants merge with other campus facilities.

20.3 Explore the costs and advantages of utilizing software to regulate and reduce energy costs, such as energy fees and CO2 emissions incurred by idle computers that could be placed in power-save mode.

20.4 As identified in the Auburn University Climate Action Plan 1.0, explore possible pilot programs utilizing solar panels and support [recommended energy saving initiatives](#).

20.5 Use the classroom inventory to identify available classroom space in academic buildings that can be used for academic purposes. Student comments received addressed the lack of available study space in designated buildings such as the RBD Library, Student Center, and various other academic buildings. During peak times, students often seek vacant classrooms in various academic buildings for studying purposes. With the recent implementation of Ad Astra software, the Registrar's Office maintains a schedule for academic classroom utilization. The Facilities Sub-Committee recommends this information be used and additional spaces be identified for students. This information should be shared with the Deans and building managers, and ultimately communicated to the students.

Recommendation 21: Support the campus sustainability efforts by implementing hydration stations on campus.

Discussion: Along with sustainable building efforts, many of the comments received by the task force also suggested Auburn University encourage the use of reusable water bottles and decrease the use of plastic bottles through implementing public hydration stations. Already utilized by many other higher education institutions, hydration stations offer water dispensers that are specifically designed to fill reusable containers and encourage members of the campus community to rely less on bottled water. Strategic installation and proper promotion of hydration stations would provide a convenient alternative, save money, reduce trash and discarded plastic on campus, and encourage sales of reusable containers.

21.1 Benchmark similar programs implemented at peer institutions with student enrollment comparable to Auburn University.

21.2 As the dialogue for this initiative takes place, key stakeholder groups such as students, faculty, staff, administrators, dining services, residence life programs, facilities, and executive office personnel should be included. A core group should be established to determine feasible locations and costs for this initiative.

Recommendation 22: Better marketing and coordination of campus recycling programs.

Discussion: Comments provided to the task force communicated confusion over the university's current recycling programs. In an effort to increase recycling efficiency, the task force recommends the Office of Sustainability address the need to better market ongoing recycling efforts to the campus community. This can be accomplished through increased public awareness campaigns and centralized recycling convenience centers. The Office of Sustainability has begun campus education and participation programs, and it is suggested these strategic efforts be supported. A continued dialogue is needed among the Office of Sustainability and the campus community.

22.1 Building Services should revisit existing recycling practices to determine if policies and practices are consistently enforced among custodial staff.

22.2 Establish an ad hoc committee to support a campus awareness campaign designed to educate units on existing recycling services available as well as new campus recycling initiatives identified by the Office of Sustainability.

Recommendation 23: Establish a working group to review management layers and structure within the Office of Facilities.

Discussion: The task force received various comments regarding facilities staff, many of which involved questions and statements over the multiple facilities staff members often assigned to complete very simple and basic work orders. The Facilities Sub-Committee followed up on these comments which suggest that a more comprehensive review of the layers of management would allow for greater efficiencies to be identified. Therefore, it is recommended that a separate ad hoc group composed of task force members, the Assistant Vice President for Facilities, representatives from Human Resources, facilities, and campus administrators be formed to further examine facilities management issues and provide recommendations.

23.1 Identify areas where excess staff and administrative support exists and recommend ways of better utilizing these individuals or where student workers may be used in lieu of excess staff members.

23.2 It is recommended that units who submit work orders for specific jobs within their areas should be provided with the opportunity to submit confidential feedback regarding the quality of work completed. This feedback should be shared with the upper levels of management within the facilities units and regularly reviewed by the Assistant Vice President for Facilities.

23.3 Assess the feasibility of implementing flexible hours for facilities staff, as many issues and problems arise outside of regular university hours.

Recommendation 24: Ensure faculty and staff are aware of new campus master plan initiatives designed to support parking and bicycle routes.

Discussion: The task force received several comments concerning parking capacity for faculty and staff and excess traffic on campus during peak hours. The Facilities Sub-Committee explored several of these issues further, and has learned that the Board of Trustees has approved construction projects designed to create increased parking for the campus community. Concern exists over the use of the new parking facilities for faculty and staff, and how parking policies will be enforced.

24.1 It is recommended that the location, type of parking, and policies for the newly constructed parking lots/decks be clearly communicated to faculty and staff prior to the construction of the projects.

24.2 Although expanding the bike routes on campus has been investigated by the Assistant Vice President for Facilities, the committee recommends a campus committee be established to further address the issue of expanding the bike lanes on campus. This group should include representatives from the Office of Sustainability, faculty, staff, students, the City of Auburn, and various other constituent groups.

24.3 Explore the feasibility of student bike “loaner programs” currently implemented at peer institutions. Increased bicycle use would reduce the number of students who rely on Tiger Transit to transition between buildings on campus.

IT Systems Sub-Committee

Key Issues Addressed and Recommendations

Recommendation 25: Eliminate duplicated services provided by Central and Distributed IT Units.

Discussion: Auburn University currently maintains a centralized Office of Information Technology and also distributed IT providers located in various academic and administrative units across campus serving a multitude of functions. In some cases, these departmental computing operations house important and sensitive Auburn University data that may not be appropriately maintained or secured. In other instances, some of the technology and services provided by these units duplicate other software, resources, operations, applications, hardware, etc. found in OIT or other academic units. While some areas have worked to minimize the duplication of centrally provided services, a significant amount of duplication remains.

25.1 Enhance end user disk space: currently, home directories are often stored either on desktops or department servers. To become more efficient, OIT should make more storage available so that units can reduce the number of file servers that they operate. This would also allow for information to be accessed anywhere on campus.

25.2 Web Content Management System: to become more efficient among the units that use the Cascade content management server, licensing should be expanded to become campus-wide and OIT should assume responsibility for the central web content management server.

25.3 Digital Signage Content Management: suggest the centralization of content management services for all digital signage around campus to facilitate content distribution and provide central emergency notification services.

25.4 Classroom technology maintenance and management: OIT should enhance classroom efficiency by providing central management of classroom technology and ensuring academic spaces are configured the same way. Maintenance of the rapidly growing pool of technology-enhanced classrooms will require additional resources and training.

25.5 Eliminate overlapping licensing for software: Units on campus may not be aware if OIT maintains the licensing agreements for certain types of software. To avoid duplication in purchasing software, better communication should be established to determine if multiple areas/units are purchasing the same products. It is also necessary to maintain a central record of what software licenses have been purchased.

Recommendation 26: Assess Banner academic information needs and create an interface tool that will allow units greater access to student information.

Discussion: Many of the Banner-related needs are centered on forecasting and capacity planning as they relate to the admissions process. It is essential that members of the Student Information Systems management team meet with Associate Deans to identify specific needs for the Banner Student Information System.

Recommendation 27: Educate units/distributed IT providers regarding whom to contact for assistance with web page design and content management.

Discussion: Many of the university's web pages contain inconsistent contact information for users with questions or comments. To assist the users and facilitate the process of updating web content, it is important to develop a standard for identifying the people or groups that are responsible for the content on each web page. Existing usability groups can assist with this and Integrated Communication Plan also requires this.

Recommendation 28: Revise existing directory tools to help faculty and staff more easily find directory information through more consistent listing of unit titles.

Discussion: Auburn currently maintains two resources for locating personnel contact information through the main Auburn website. The People Finder for individuals extracts information directly from Banner, whereas the People Finder-Departments and Offices function utilizes the phone directory maintained by the central webmaster.

28.1 Provide a more consistent definition for a unit that is compatible with both HR and Banner.

Recommendation 29: Academic units transition to a central document archiving system to improve the effectiveness of student records management.

Discussion: University Human Resources has transitioned from paper storing to electronic records of all new employees, and it is recommended that academic units do the same for student records. Some areas are already doing this through WebXtender, however, this should be a long-term efficiency for all units. Help is needed from several campus offices to ensure IT manages the tools and records; the biggest challenge involves units using different types of practices.

Marketing Sub-Committee

Key Issues and Recommendations

Recommendation 30: Provide a clear clarification for a "Dotted Line" Report as outlined in the Integrated Communications and Marketing Plan.

Discussion: In 2010, the Office of Communications and Marketing (OCM) released its Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan designed to better integrate staff working in communicator positions throughout the academic and non-academic units. Specifically, the plan calls for more integration of communication projects over time to better coordinate messages to external constituencies in an effort to better leverage their effectiveness. While the Marketing Sub-committee agrees that integrating the communication efforts will only strengthen the image of the campus units and enhance Auburn University's reputation, confusion exists as to how a dotted line report is defined.

30.1 The task force recommends the definition of dual reports clarify who the communicator within a unit is specifically responsible for reporting to OCM, and clear policies for the centralization of press releases.

Recommendation 31: Establish a plan for decreasing the outsourcing of web design.

Discussion: Currently, Auburn University is completing implementation of its Content Management System (CMS) to organize and facilitate campus websites. The 2011 implementation of a redesigned university web template using the CMS resulted in a highly collaborative transition among the units, OCM, and OIT. However, several campus units still outsource their web design to off-campus vendors, resulting in dated websites that do not conform to the revised look.

31.1 The Marketing Sub-Committee recommends an ad hoc group be established to examine units that currently outsource their web design to third party vendors and provide recommendations for the eventual termination of these contracts, including cost-savings and a plan for transitioning to these sites to either a campus communicator or a staff member from OIT. In order for this to be successful, the CMS will need to be implemented and appropriate training made available.

Recommendation 32: Continue to reduce the number of printed publications and materials used for marketing and promotion.

Discussion: An area addressed through focus groups included the continued use of printed materials by units for the purposes of marketing and promotion. While some units still require printed publications for off-campus audiences, the Marketing Sub-Committee believes a close examination of printed publications and costs should be evaluated. OCM continues to advise units on alternatives to printed copies. COSAM is an example of a college that has reduced its print publications due to COSAM communication transitioning to OCM.

Recommendation 33: Investigate the feasibility of implementing digitized campus signage to inform students of campus events, such as speakers and events.

Discussion: In addition to traditional means of communicating with students, the Marketing Sub-Committee recommends the university examine the costs associated with implementing digital signage throughout campus. Establishing a network of digital signs throughout the Auburn campus would complement other internal communications, such as the weekly e-newsletters for faculty, staff, and students, special broadcast e-mails, critical alerts, and the calendar of events. The digital signage system could serve in the university's emergency response plan,