ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES AT USASK

Faculty Experiences

Data Collection

01

Survey 2020 (450 respondents)

(Qualitative and quantitative)

02

38 Invited qualitative submissions to Jan 25-March 20, 2022

03

14 Complaints to USFA Jan 10 – March 20, 2022

Areas of Focus

Connection Point	Research Ethics Board / Process	Concur
Direct Travel and Usask Travel Policy	IT	UnivRS

Summary of Findings

1. Faculty have become "co-producers" of administrative processes in unprecedented ways over the past 8-10 years.

2. Most survey respondents perceive that administrative processes interfere with other responsibilities.

3. Faculty are poorly equipped to be co-producers of many administrative processes and consequently experience co-producing as fraught, stressful, and time-consuming.

5. Hidden productivity costs associated with increased co-production hinder faculty in supporting the university's mission in research and teaching excellence.

5. Co-production is happening in areas that are not beneficial for research and teaching (e.g., expense reimbursement) while in other areas, co-production would be beneficial, but does not happen (e.g., software approval/downloads, booking flights)

Result #1: General Administrative

Most survey respondents perceive that administrative processes interfere with other responsibilities.

86%
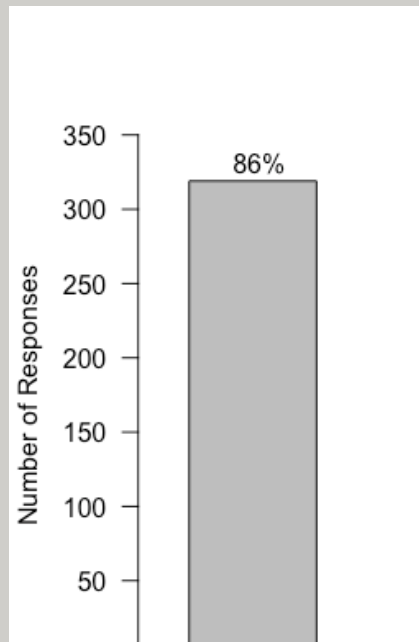
Are more and more admin tasks given to faculty, interfering with other responsibilities?

"I spend way too much time doing work that should be done by the office coordinator, which is a waste of my time and expertise."

"We have laid off a number of administrative staff and don't have enough admin support. I am left to do much of the basic paperwork, organizing and coordinating meetings for our department. It is not an effective use of my time."

"What frustrates me most right now is that when I asked for assistance on various administrative items, I am sent to a set of instructions for how to do it myself.
I am an academic and researcher (a Canada Research Chair) but am expected to do my own accounting and financial reporting, fundraising, human resources, archiving of data and database management, computer and technology management, publishing, website management, marketing and communications, as well as reception, occupational health and safety, and logistics and procurement. That's above and beyond research, teaching, committee work, and public service."

"For the past decade, ever increasing number of rules, and growing central admin and executive positions, have deteriorated the ability to do research at UofS because processes get ever more complicated, lengthy, and onerous on faculty."

Result #2: General Administrative

Majority of survey respondents perceive that administrative support is insufficient for competitive research programs.
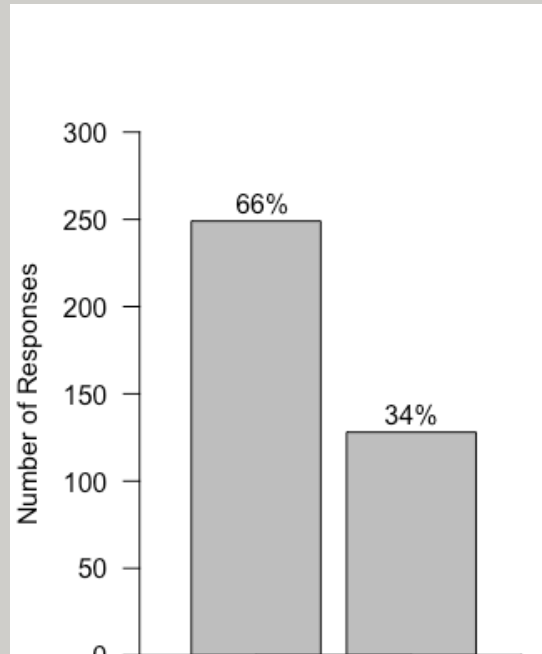
Has university administrative support helped you run a competitive research program/receive Tri-council funding?

"Support for research is quickly dwindling to the point where I am seriously considering downgrading my research program (e.g. animal support, budget management, equipment issues, HR etc)."

"Limited time for research with heavy teaching and admin roles - hard to be all things and provide a good job at everything."

"...experiences similar to those described in Letters 12 and 23 above contributed to my decision not to seek further SSHRC funding at present (I held a SSHRC Insight Grant from 2013 to 2018). It seemed to me a better use of my time to focus it on actual research and writing than on the bureaucratic processes involved in administering a grant. That said, we did have (and still have) some great people on the College of Arts and Science admin support team, and in Research Services, who were endlessly patient with my continually failed attempts to fill out the incomprehensible forms. I understand that we need processes to account for the proper use of the funds entrusted to us. But let's not make research funding an impediment to research.

Result #3: IT

Most survey respondents (especially in Science) perceive that IT's control over computers and other IT policies negatively affect their productivity and workload.

All Faculty

Science Faculty
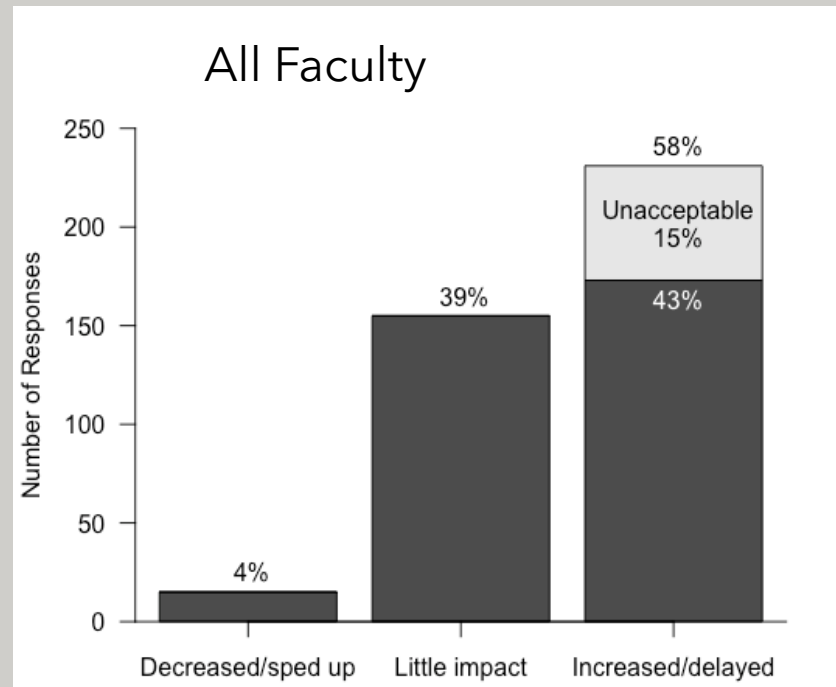
"It is annoying and time consuming that I have to ask for IT service to install a printer software or free statistics software. It consumes my time and delays my work."
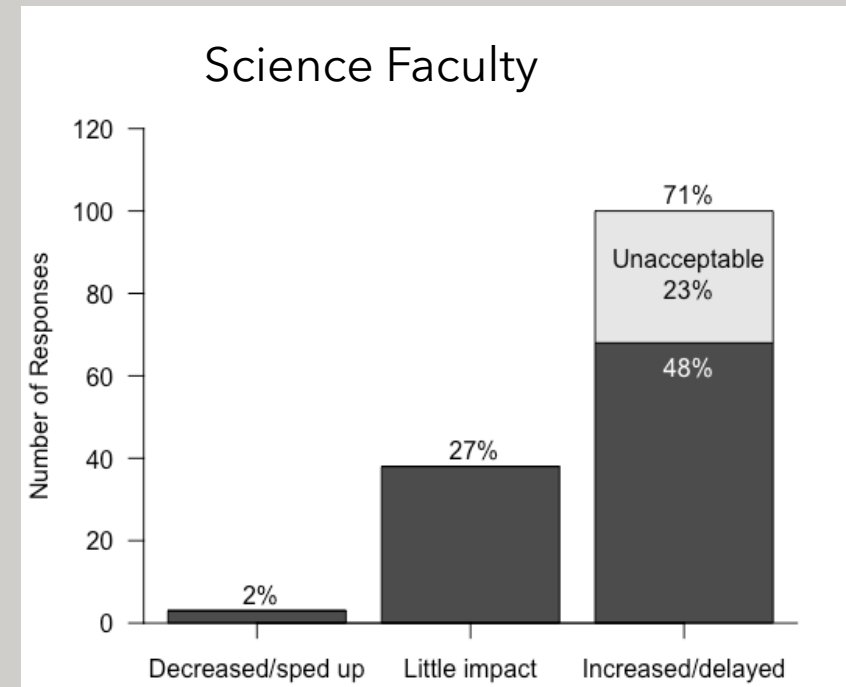
"I hate needing to submit a ticket to get IT support. It means a wait time, inconsistent support, and no relationship with a key support person."

Examples:

Many faculty find IT security controls excessive, inefficient, and time-consuming

- "Just in the past week, dealing with the problems that have arisen with me not having admin access to my own new university laptop and desktop computers (issues with syncing different cloud program files, improper mapping of printers, and inability to download programs that I have my own licenses for) took up almost two days of my time between setting up three different sessions with IT to get them set up properly and the things I had to fix as a result of my files being a complete mess because of the syncing issues (and I still haven't sorted it out completely - I have another session with IT set up for next week). I could have done all this set up properly in less than half hour if I had just had admin access, as I have always done at my last university and on my own personal laptop. I've never faced so many computer set up issues before. The worst part about this was that these two days were the only days I had fully clear this semester so far to really concentrate on research, and I lost both of them. I would have been better off continuing to work from my own personal laptop than to switch to university-managed computers."

- " multi-factor authentication (MFA) is tedious and time consuming. It additionally requires us to have an alternative device (usually a cell phone) on us at all times - many people do not want to have a cell phone, others have one but do not want to carry it at all times. I have come to campus, been asked to MFA my password when logging in to PAWS, only to realize I forgot my phone at home. As such, I was unable to check my emails or conduct any of my basic work without returning home to pick up my phone."

- "The restrictions and controls placed by IT make sense in some cases and maintaining security is clearly important, but IT takes it way too far. For example, to get into my email through canvas I must log into canvas with my nsid and password, click email then enter my nsid and password AGAIN (it is supposed to be able to set it so I don't need to do that every time but that never works), then I need to get a text from the university to type in the secret code. It is so ridiculous that I never really use it."

- "That IT sends out fake phishing emails constantly to test us is an insult and waste of time."

Examples:

There are several problems with IT hardware/software support:

- Unstable access
- Too restricted
- Long approval and service wait times that impede teaching, student support and research.
- "One size fits all" approaches do not align with realities of diverse research needs and processes in a comprehensive university

○ I need to install bird-banding software and some teaching software (not available on the windows software downloads) on my IT-managed office computer, so I submitted a request, but the ticket got bounced around between 3 people. It is apparently now waiting for a "software approval committee" decision. But it is now coming up to 3 weeks waiting, and despite several email queries to IT to try to prod the decision along, nothing has happened yet. The bird banding office wanted the data submitted ASAP, so I just borrowed a colleague's computer from outside the U of S, so I could enter and submit my data using her computer instead

○ I was looking into getting a Grammarly license for the Department to assist with plagiarism detection (for instructors) and plagiarism checking (for students) – but Grammarly is not approved because of privacy issues, as it keeps copies of the submitted papers. Since the point of plagiarism detection is to check papers against other papers, this shouldn't be too surprising: but it is not allowed. Instead, we are told to google, because we apparently have nothing else to do.

○ I have been asked multiple years in a row if I got permission for the same software that I went through the ridiculous hoops the year before. Everything takes forever - for example NVivo is free but it took me days to get it installed after it stopped working early. My graduate students working remotely were no longer eligible for the free nVivo because they were "not on campus computers" even though they **couldn't be on campus computers** because the campus was shut down. So I had to buy them licenses for programs I wouldn't usually have. And again - all of this took weeks because of the sheer number of emails we had to exchange.

○ Purchased two computers for graduate students (during COVID) to enable them to perform their research from their UofS offices. Computers arrived to the IT office but IT people were too busy to install them for 4-6 weeks (inadequate staffing).

Example: Mac users find support to be insufficient

"...the fact that IT offers limited and poor Mac support but insists on their network management software is deeply problematic. Many Mac users could more easily repair their own machines or obtain aid via services such as applecare but this is made difficult for those who do not have administrative access."

Between October 2021 and now (February 2022), I have had to contact IT numerous times as the Macbook [through IT acquisitions] is unable to connect to my departmental printer. I have had 6 in-person meetings where someone from IT has come to my office to address this issue, and 2 additional remote sessions. The issue has been recurring, and it has greatly impeded my ability to complete both research and teaching duties. For instance, I taught two courses in-person in the Fall 2021 semester; I was unable to print materials for class for weeks on end (and given that many of our administrative support staff and fellow faculty members were working remotely, I was not even able to ask others to print the materials for me). At one point, IT recommended that I do not bring my Macbook Air home with me (i.e., off campus at all), as every time I 'removed' it from the server, the issue would recur. This suggestion was, of course, ridiculous and not conducive to my work. This has all been particularly frustrating given that I had no problems working with my Macbook Air and the printing system when it was my own (as opposed to the one the IT set up for me).

I have a mac that I also run windows on via boot camp. When ICT set it up, I requested geoda a stars package be installed. It was installed on the mac portion. When I requested it for the windows portion it took 3 weeks to be approved, as it was not on the approved software list. How could that be if it was installed on the mac portion? I needed the software for teaching a week after I discovered it wasn't on the windows portion. I no longer needed it by the time its installation was approved.

Support for Mac users is virtually non-existent. In anticipation of returning to campus on a semi-regular basis I intended to update necessary software on my office computer - including the operating system. After hours of attempting the installation through the Self Service (for Macs) unsuccessfully and several hours on the phone with IT I was told to bring my computer in to IT and they would erase the drive and reinstall everything. Days later when picking it up I was told that erasing was not necessary - self service did not work but they were successful via another means which I could have done had I been properly instructed. Was without my computer for over a week. I have never successfully installed software from the Self Service portal onto my Mac and despite software being available in the portal many still require administrative access to install. What is the point of the portal?

I do not feel I should have to explain my reasons for adopting these products - they are gaining in market share and offer numerous benefits for certain researchers, professionals, artists, and students. Moreover, a visual survey of my students over the past 2 weeks suggests that over 40% are using mac (versus 'other') laptops within the classroom. Some have also shifted to IPad pros for note-taking and classroom work. I feel offering full mac support is in keeping with academic freedom and current IT trends. I will not give up my mac and will avoid non-compatible systems and processes in my teaching and research.

Example: EDI issues with automatic and technology-driven processes and policies

"When I went on maternity leave, imagine my surprise to learn that I didn't even have access to Word as I was trying to shepherd my graduate students through their theses with an infant in my arms. Another thing that happened to me when I went on maternity leave is that my parking pass was automatically revoked during the portion of leave where I wasn't receiving a salary top-up. This happened because they could no longer take parking fees from my paycheque, which I guess I understand, but no one mentioned this to me or asked if I wanted to pay out of pocket. It was also not automatically reinstated when I started receiving salary again. To me this suggests there are multiple problems with the "automatic" processes that happen when a person's employment status changes temporarily."

"At the level of Joint Benefits, we were made aware of a faculty member on maternity leave who was shut out of the A3 License or Microsoft License. This was ultimately fixed for faculty on Maternity leave but the problem remains for faculty on LTD. The net effect is that faculty on LTD are affected by some sort of IT code i.e. a "date feed from one system to another" whereby those who are on LTD are cut off from access to the Microsoft License and cannot upgrade software or programs that other faculty have access to. There doesn't appear to be any "policy" that authorizes this and when I asked who authorized this they just shrugged their shoulders. They claim that LTD equates to "terminated" for IT purposes. When asked, no one could explain what other IT services were cut off for those on LTD. But did qualify that LTD means after the 112 day period of salary continuance. I could see happening for faculty who have been transitioned to permanent LTD ie. after 2 years 112 days on LTD it has been determined that faculty are not ever likely to RTW. But for those who have not yet been deemed permanently disabled this restriction seems unnecessary."

Result #4: IT policy rationales and proposed benefits do not outweigh the costs to teaching and research

"I had IT come and install polling software for teaching on my computer and 2 computers in rooms where I was teaching (existing software did not meet my needs and I do not have permission to install on my own). Had to have it done again this year, as the software had vanished since the previous installation. It worked fine the week before I was teaching but when I went to teach it was gone. The extra effort I put into preparing polling slides was wasted. I have given up and will not try this again, even though it would be better for my students. "

"I had a software program working on my university owned computer in since 2013. At some point between 2020 and 2022, the university blocked my use of this software due to it not being approved software. It is research software that has been working for years. We didn't have a need for it again until recently, so I do not know how long it has been blocked. We did use it in the last 1 to 1.5 years. They never called me to ask about it. When we tried to use the software again it gave me an error message to contact my administrator. I submitted the website of the program to IT for their approval. Why couldn't this be done before they blocked it? A remote IT session was used to reinstall the software and then I realized that I needed to re-enter my license key. Unfortunately, I have lost the license key since we were using the software already for 5+years. The software company is a small niche research company with minimal support. I have been emailing back and forth with the company for 2 weeks and have not been able to get an answer to how I can get a new license key. I may just need to purchase the software again. This should have been avoidable. It has been a complete waste of time and the "approval" process of my software by IT seemed quite cursory so I am unsure why it needed to be blocked in the first place and without informing me of the block so I could properly provide documentation beforehand."

"The controls that IT places on office and especially laboratory/research computers causes no end of difficulty. Within my lab we have multiple pieces of research equipment with networking capabilities, and which are operated by computers. None of the systems can be used to full capacity because IT will only allow them on the network if they are set up with their management systems. Most of these machines have been setup and calibrated by the manufacturer and there is no guarantee that installing this extra software will not interfere or cause functional issues. Additionally, the software for this equipment is not on the pre-approved IT list. IT also causes issues with our shared lab machines because their tight controls prevent the download of packages, extensions and upgrades."

Additional Example of IT Policy Costs Outweighing Benefits for Graduate Students:

"A graduate student needed to run an intensive data analysis that we have run in the lab several times before. In years past, the graduate student could set up the analysis so that research assistants could run it over several weeks. This time, the research assistants were unable to run it due to the blanket IT policy that blocks administrative privileges even on research computers. Notably, the analysis was to be run using research software that is so fundamental and widely-used that the university has a site license for it. My part-time lab manager worked with IT staff over a period of 6 weeks to resolve this problem. The costs of this problem, which would never have existed if researchers' needs were properly considered in administrative policies, were as follows. It cost my tri-council grant 6 hours of lab manager pay. It cost the university pay for IT staff and faculty (for me, meetings with my lab manager and graduate student and responding to numerous emails about the problem). Worst of all, my graduate student was set back 6 weeks in their research project. This has an immediate financial cost (extending the time the student has to be funded to complete their degree) and potential future financial costs (this setback delays publication of the research project, which means it cannot be reported in my upcoming tri-council grant application, which reduces my chances of success because trainees' publications are important grant merit indicators). It also has less tangible future costs as it is demoralizing for the students and for me, and makes it all the more difficult to contemplate training new students in this type of environment. No university that takes its research mission seriously should have policies in place that routinely incur costs like these. I should note that this is not a complaint about IT staff, who were as helpful and responsive as they could be but likewise hampered by counterproductive policy."
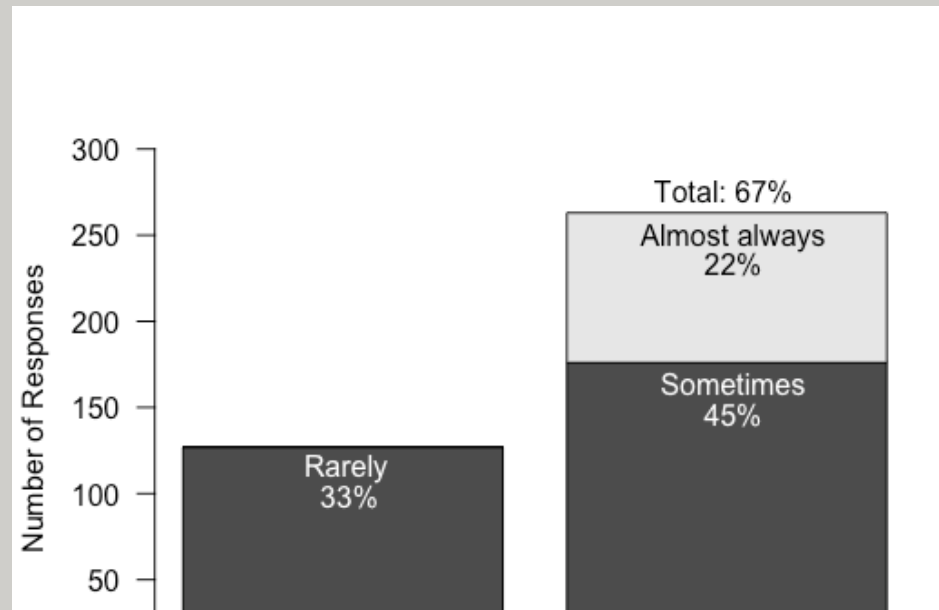
IT policies and controls ultimately impede research and knowledge dissemination

It is somewhat difficult to write this knowing that the largest part of "IT" is comprised of dedicated, hard-working, and committed staff who go above and beyond in their employment here. I've worked with many of them over the years and have been truly impressed with their contributions to the university and to the work of faculty. The problem is that in the name of sound security and financial management policies, someone has made rigid decisions concerning IT–hardware and software both–that impede our ability to do our work effectively, or at all. My open access research website–the product of 17 years of research and online publications by my students and colleagues around the world, was made inaccessible outside of the U of S network in September. The server it was running on was supposedly being retired and was using an outdated version of Python, on which my site was running its api. IT staff attempted to help getting it running on another server but could not devote the time and resources necessary. Finally, I ended up taking the entire site and setting it up on a server platform provided by a commercial company off campus. I have hired a developer and I am still working on updating the scripts and relationships to make the site and api functional again. It was working and available on the U of S server. And then it was simply made inaccessible to the world outside the U of S network, even though it continued to be functional and accessible on the campus network. This was unacceptable: the site was serving 3000 to 4000 unique hosts per month. The highest "clicks" (any click that sends the user to a page outside of Google Search, Discover, or News) as counted by Google Web Developer tools were, by country, first from the UK, followed by USA, India, and Canada. It was an important part of my research identity and my credibility as a researcher in my field, to international scholars and to interested public viewers around the world. The amount of time and expense this has cost me has set me back a year. My graduate student is not able to update and complete a project on the site until (hopefully) this spring. The contributions of past graduate students soon to be on the job market are invisible to the world. Surely there would have been ways to keep a website accessible without causing security issues to the rest of the campus network while the necessary upgrades and move were being completed. I understand the need for security, and I appreciate how much effort must go into maintaining the campus system; but some sensitivity to faculty and graduate research is also important. I can't really apply for Tri-Council funding to fund future graduate students to work on a project that is at the moment not functional. Another troubling development, secondary to this, is the inability to purchase equipment or software without jumping through hoops (where one has to explain and defend one's own professional needs for what has been perfectly acceptable purchases in the past). I now feel the necessity to purchase my own computers and other equipment with my personal funds, and conduct teaching prep, marking, communication, and research through my personally owned MacBooks simply so I can install (and experiment with) the software that I need to use in a timely and efficient manner. I am told I am not allowed to bring this equipment to work and connect to the campus network, however. It is beyond frustrating. Edit: I should add, this website is funded by CFI, SSHRC, and the Government of SK with applications detailing it as an open access site. And someone at University IT made it inaccessible. I will do the work to make it accessible again, but I have to say surely there must have been a better way.

Result #5:
Connection Point is difficult to use and inefficient

"I have had some good experiences but generally connection point is slow and confusing and everything that used to get done quickly and efficiently drags on for weeks and months and because it is by design so all-inclusive the staff working on these things can't possibly be experts so it's often confusing and frustrating."

"Connection point - difficult to use, I try to avoid it."

"I will sometimes ask for a connection point agent to help me make a letter of offer, only to be sent to a webpage with templates to choose from. There I'll have to find the right template for my hire, and then when I fill it in, get it signed, and send it to whoever is supposed to be doing the "EJS" whatever that is - I find out I used the wrong template, made a mistake with the wage and benefits calculations, or something else. Then I am asked to start again. There is more time and resources spent telling me what I have done wrong then it would take for someone in CP to just fix it and send me back the right version for signatures. Where did all the admin folks go who used to do this stuff?"

How often do you have to make follow-up queries or corrections to ConnectionPoint?

Example:

Connection Point rules and practices are inefficient and stall research

○ My research group frequently incurs substantial hotel ($5000 plus for a single bill) and airline excess baggage fees ($1500 plus) during fieldwork. I find it endlessly frustrating that I need to put these on a personal credit card and then wait weeks for Concur reimbursement, when I have a p-card in my pocket. I take these on my self (to the point of arranging to call a hotel when a group of students is checking out), because I think it is unethical for me to ask a grad student or undergrad to float university business costs. Long discussions with Connection point have not identified any solutions that will a) allow me to pay the research expenses conveniently at the point when they are incurred, and b) that are administratively straightforward. The Connection Point manager, for example, suggested that I talk to procurement to set up contracts with the hotels! I am sure that will work just fine with your average small-town hotel…. And yes, I am aware of travel advances (tried that and the students final travel claim was delayed for weeks). Bottom line, funding agencies including NSERC are clearly fine with the p-card paper trails, as on these same trips many other expenses including fuel are paid using p-cards. P-card reconciliation is are the most straightforward and time-efficient financial process I have encountered on campus, so I don't understand why we cannot use this convenient payment method for research expenses such as hotels and baggage fees (when one is working in the North, the airline is also the shipping company).

○ Connection Point recently fired a research assistant of mine because that person had not worked for three months. They did not consult with me or the RA beforehand – had they done so, they would have learned that the RA had some health issues and was not able to work. Instead, we had to go and rehire the RA.

○ I have had to prepare letters of offers for graduate students as well as honoraria for guest speakers and this has literally taken me weeks into months because of the sheer number of emails we have to send back and forth. I have even sent examples of PREVIOUS LETTERS THEY WROTE as examples, and still not been able to get them done. Inevitably, they send me to wiki links that don't make any sense.

Example: Connection Point
Complaints about approval processes and reimbursement/payment are commonplace.

- "Paying someone an honorarium to speak in my class was insane - I was very tempted to just pay it out of pocket to end the hell of dealing with CP. This was for $50! The level of information they needed about the speaker was intrusive and embarrassing to ask for."

- "Connection point refused payment of a legitimate invoice indicating that I had not approved it. In the service contract, Connection Point had directed the provider to send the invoice directly to them (Connection Point). Once the invoice was eventually approved for payment, the wrong amount was paid - resulting in several additional weeks of delays to the provider."

- "Time sensitive invoices have been submitted weeks in advance but paid late by CP resulting in late fees."

- "My BIGGEST issue is with Connection Point for travel claims. It often takes a long time to get a refund, usually to the point where I need to pay interest on my credit card because of the lateness."

- "We have continuous problems paying research assistants or research participants outside Canada, with CP demanding that we provide SINs (not usually issued to those living outside Canada) and refusing to reimburse us."

Examples:

Connection Point policies and processes lead to:

-research project delays

- program completion delays

- Administrative time to pay for help undercuts savings

○ *"I started the process of getting an RFP for a service that I needed by submitting to CP. This service was related to a tri-council grant and was needed to carry out the research. It took a week and my prompting before my request was even acknowledged. Then it took over 2 months for the actual RFP to be prepared by procurement and I had to send frequent emails to ask about the status of the RFP. Once the RFP was finally prepared, it had to get the approval of the technology assessment team, which delayed the process another 3 to 4 weeks. The actual posting and bidding process is another 4-6 weeks. This is a 4+ month delay in grant-funded research and the project is now way behind schedule. "*

○ I am now being asked to add money to my grant applications to piece together to pay for my own program manager to do this work for me, to free up time for me to take on more students. But then, I spend a lot of time getting the forms in place for that program manager to be able to do tasks for me. Forms upon forms upon forms…"

○ Getting very specific questions answered through connectionpoint is also not effective (although not always connectionpoint's fault). I had a specific question about honoraria for research participants. This question was raised by the ethics board and I could not resubmit my ethics until it was answered. I emailed connectionpoint. They didn't have the answer, but added the controller's office to the ticket so that they could answer the question. It took 4 weeks and me following up multiple times to finally get a response. This delayed a grant-funded research project unnecessarily.

Result #6: UnivRS is not user friendly and causes endless problems for faculty
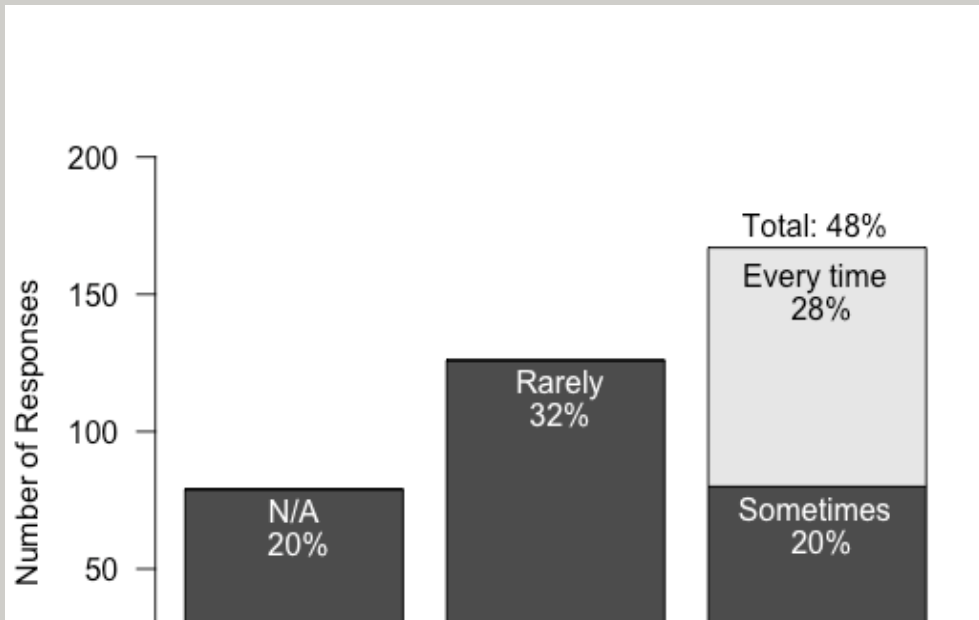

How often do you have problems managing grants or new submissions through UnivRS?

"Difficult to navigate and use this program and not all information is relevant."

"Not user friendly. Extremely time consuming. Clerical work that should be done by someone who does it all the time, so they get good at it. By the time I need to do it again I have to relearn it."

"It is too slow, it crashes frequently, it requires too much information, it is cumbersome, I have no idea if I have ever submitted something."

Result #7: Concur is Time consuming and difficult to use
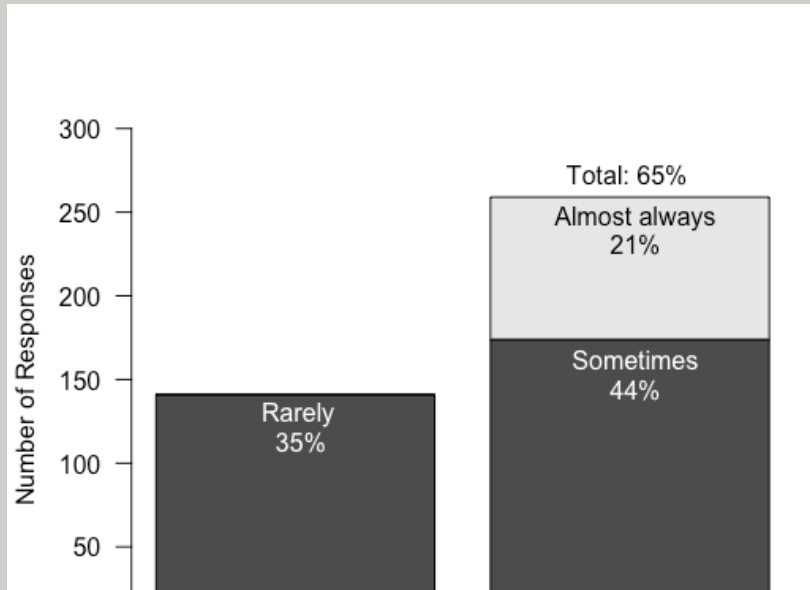
How often do you have problems with Concur?
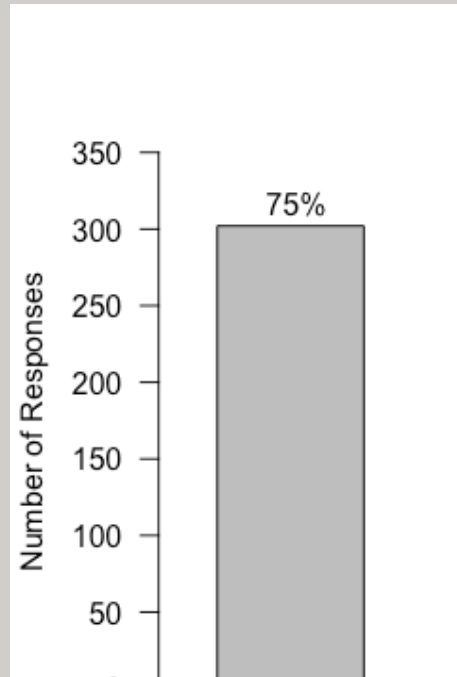
For your level of use, would it be simpler if Concur expenses were handled by an administrative assistant?

"In general, Concur is extremely difficult to use and requires a lot of back-and-forth with finance and admin staff in my college."

"Concur is another very poorly designed software. The level of user-unfriendliness is just unbelievable!"

Examples: Travel/Concur booking restrictions

◦ **Booking through Concur may conflict with USASK and Tri-Council Policies to book "economically"**

◦ **Travel support is not flexible enough to meet research needs, especially for field research**

◦ *"A challenge for me is that I do work in the arctic and flights are tremendously expensive, so I try to find the best prices and have done so for many years. Now concur requires that I only buy through the concur booking system and it does not include many flights that are available, so it is a new and unnecessary barrier to my research and ends up being cost inefficient and wastes hundreds of dollars. Due to the vagaries of northern travel I often need to make last minute flight changes that are often during evenings and weekends in remote areas that may or may not have adequate cell phone coverage. I need to be able to make changes as I go and the new system is a major barrier to that for reasons that make no sense. For a decade I booked using concur when I could and not using concur when needed with zero issues. This is also true when using small rural airlines in the south as well that do not show up on the concur system."*

◦ I spoke with the university's travel agent about purchasing airline tickets in the near future. Honestly, I did not appreciate a foreseeable problem but again, have not yet purchased any tickets. However, I can add that I have a credit card that allow me to check 2 bags (luggage) at no charge. By using the university's travel agent, I can not take advantage of this feature. I have not paid for checked luggage for years, but if I assume the fees are $25 to $50 per bag per flight, this is a lost savings (added expense) of up to between $100 to $200 per round trip.

Examples: Travel/Concur booking restrictions

- **The rationale for the policy is unclear and/or unjustified**

- **Policies fail to adhere to principles of equity, diversity and inclusion**

"As a result of COVID-19, I have not traveled in almost 2 years, but I find it outrageous that the university does not allow purchasing airfare tickets outside of the concur system anymore."

"On Jan. 27th I wrote to HR (Wellness) asking about my options, given my medical concerns. Today I received a response from Sara Wurst explaining that I can be allowed to book a shorter duration flight by phoning Direct Travel and selecting the chosen flight, but I will be required to pay the difference (if there is one) out of my own pocket. To be frank, I am relieved to be allowed this much consideration given what I've been hearing from others. However, I wanted to bring this to the USFA's attention as it strikes me as a failure to take the health of the employees seriously. "

Result #8 Research Ethics Board (REB):

Faculty report unjustified and unacceptable approval delays that compromise grant terms and program completion

○ "I've had students sit around for 1-2 semesters waiting to hear from the REB or working on revisions, making zero progress on their theses and dissertations. I now advise my students to apply for ethics before they even send a draft of their project to their advisory committee, knowing this makes more sense in terms of REB timelines to make progress. We have students in my program who are losing funding because they have taken too long and were delayed by the REB.

○ "...the community partner was the one providing funding through another federal grant and they ended up having to give money back because ethics was too slow and cumbersome.

○ In a new partnership with a community org in Alberta, I immediately said that we should go through UofA ethics, rather than UofS and their online system has been breezy so far.

○ The long waits for ethical review (Beh) hold up researchers and projects and waste grant money. Ethical review of some of our lab projects (all MINIMAL RISK) has taken up to three months. Ironically, this stalls researchers and students from engaging in the very works on which they are evaluated by USask and other organizations / bodies. This delay also creates problems for project staffing - ethical delays of this magnitude mean paying people to largely tread water (salaried) or having them leave the project for others with more immediate hours available (hourly).

○ As we cannot recruit or collect data without ethical approval, the gap between ethical application submission and data analysis is grossly exaggerated. This is very problematic for grants with shorter timelines (12 or 24 months) and places us at a disadvantage relative to other institutions. This discrepancy in turn-around time for ethics between USask and other institutions has become more obvious in speaking with colleagues at similar-sized institutions across Canada and the USA.

○ Animal care ethics stalled the research project of a graduate student for 5 months because of discoordination and lost documents. Now this graduate student is running out of stipend.

Result #8:

Faculty report that REB processes overstep the scope and create extra and unnecessary work

- "The REB and the chair absolutely overstep their boundaries and their role in my research - making comments on my methods and hypotheses, and they are increasingly uncomfortable with even the most minor amounts of discomfort. They make suggestions not knowing anything about my discipline."

- "Animal ethics it must be made very clear that the purpose is to ensure animal welfare and responsible use of animals. If basic clinical procedures are being done that are not actually invasive, and clinicians with skills are performing them, then the AREB review should be taking the position of how we can help facilitate the research, not how much can we police it by asking what seems like the obligatory 10-20 questions just in case the protocol is audited by the CCAC. Scope creep away from just reviewing for animal welfare is a concern for me.

- I also really feel there is zero accounting for people's qualifications. As a veterinary specialist I am constantly having to defend/state/justify my qualifications even when you are a boarded specialist in the area."

- "the repeating of the full application for animal ethics every 4(?) years, why is this needed if the methodology and animal usage has not changed? And why do the applications say 'do not copy and paste methodology from the grant application', why not? and why do I need to repeat the methodology with every annual update instead of saying unchanged?

- For human ethics, in past a decision regarding exemption was made based on a short summary, but now it seems a full application is required for every project, exempt or not."

- "...in one instance, the community partner was told they were too involved in the ethics process, thereby reducing the credibility of the research (very difficult to stomach, given the definite need for increased community ownership and leadership within research processes)"

Result #8: REB and research contract policies impede Tri-Council grant hosting

"I have to tell my pan-Canadian teams about how long the ethics process takes here, and frequently suggest they leave SK off as a data collection site due to these concerns of delays in ethics if they are in a rush.

"Another issue that impacts team work has been contracts. Contracts (or whatever this unit is called) only agree to sign if the contract solely includes individuals at USask - I have a data access contract for a pan-Canadian team from a national data platform and I could only get a contract that included me and my staff at USask. I can access data when other members obtain a data access contract from this national data platform at their institution, but they cannot access data when I am the PI and I hold the data access agreement signed by USask and this national data platform. In the future, even when I am PI on the grant, I will ask a co-I to be the PI on the national data platform contract and avoid USask contracts completely."

"I had to put in a second data access request to this national data platform for my non-USask co-I and spend an additional 3,000 from my CIHR grant to ensure that my co-I had data access. This national data platform (50,000 Canadians, longitudinally assessed) has never encountered a problem like this - and they have thousands of projects approved (I sit on their data access committee). The USask procedures are out of step with all known institutions who allow multi-site teams to have one data contract signed, and the PI takes responsibility for distributing the data as per ethics and the national data platform's policies. I can understand why USask wants to limit contacts only to those they have control over, but these contracts are to access data - for secondary analysis…. Not a risky endeavor."

Consequences

Inefficient design of administrative co-production results in reduced faculty focus on excellence in research and teaching

Reduced student support and classroom teaching innovation

Faculty relinquishing their role as PIs in collaborative projects to avoid inefficient admin processes at the UofS

Decreased faculty morale and motivation

Faculty find ways to subvert the policies to do their work, or they avoid doing the work altogether (e.g., deinstalling lock-up software installed by ICT, not engaging in research that requires lengthy ethics approval processes).

Problematic impacts on equity/diversity/inclusion

Reduced research productivity impacts university ranking among U15

Efficiency metrics used to justify policies are incomplete and miss the most important metrics around achievement of the university's research and teaching mission.
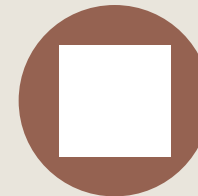
Recommendations I

Ensure administrative process goals are fully aligned with research and teaching goals.
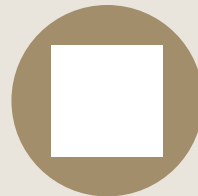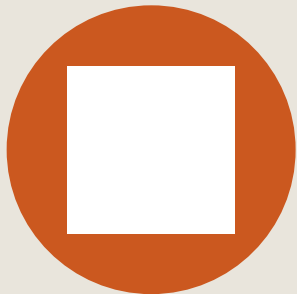
Provide administrative support for areas of co-production that harm productivity in research and teaching (e.g., expense reimbursement claims).

Allow co-production in administrative areas that are beneficial to teaching and research excellence (e.g., give faculty administrative access over their computers).

Recommendations II

Instead of administrative leaders and external consultants working to develop administrative processes, FSD should consult with the faculty, staff, and student users of these systems to design better processes.
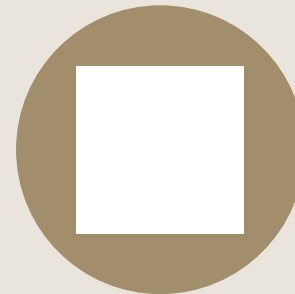
Cost-benefit evaluations must evaluate the full range of the hidden productivity costs of administrative processes, including the cost of added faculty workload, reduced research productivity, reduced teaching innovation, lower faculty morale and increased burnout, extended student time to completion, and reputational costs for the institution.