



Transforming Work in Higher Education:
Rethinking How Administrative Functions
are Delivered

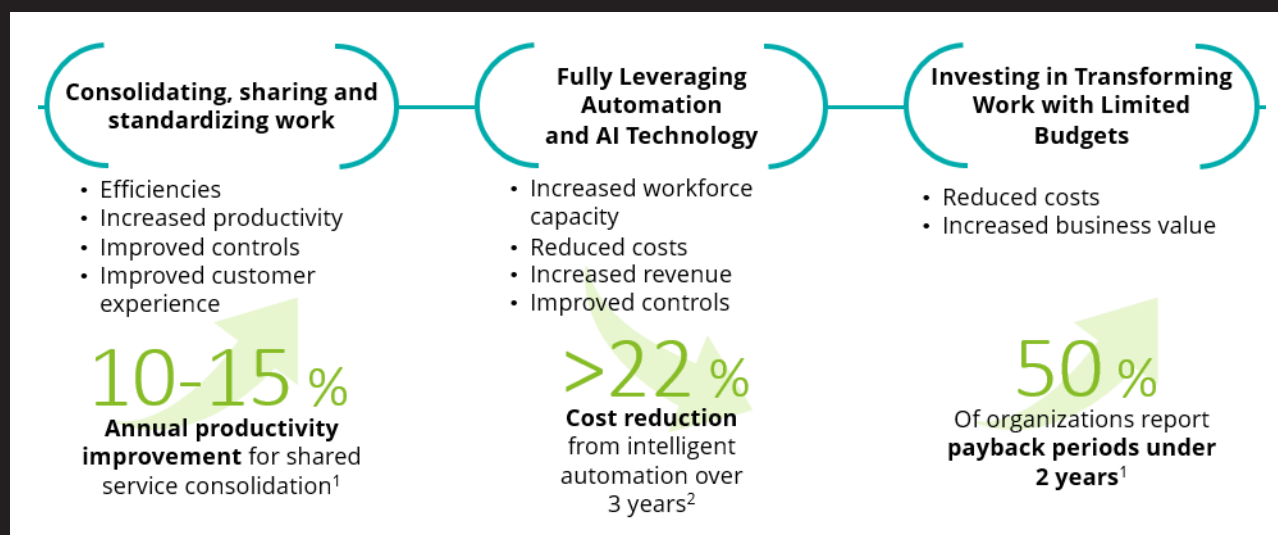
Changing Nature of Work in Higher Education

As increasing connectivity, technology advancements, robotics, and cognitive tools change the nature of work, socio-economic disruptors like the pandemic called into question long held orthodoxies. This provides a unique opportunity for colleges and universities to reimagine their operations and talent model while revisiting the core mission of education and research.

Work is evolving in two complementary directions. In one direction, administrators are rethinking work and how it is delivered to redesign jobs and take advantage of new opportunities to automate workflow processes. At the same time, other administrators are rethinking work to take advantage of new capacity freed up by job redesign. The benefit of such business process transformation leading to increased efficiencies and reduced costs.

With business process transformation, work is no longer narrowly focused on task execution: work is about creating new sources of value for customers and the business. Deloitte approaches transformation in stages that deliver a mission-focused strategy and high-level organizational structure, grounded in the principles of future growth and sustainability.

Transforming Work Can Lead to Measurable Impacts:



Long-held beliefs and orthodoxies about how and where work must be done, and by whom, have been challenged. Institutions need to rapidly reimagine their administrative functions in a holistic and integrated way. Deloitte enables administrators to explore ways to begin that reimagination—focused on the distribution and delivery of work across the organization and between humans and technology, which can open the door to more wide-ranging reimagination of work and its outcomes—and the resulting workforce, workplace, and technology implications.

Preparing for a Successful Transformation

Key attributes of success have been identified to highlight the need for agility and resiliency while driving efficiencies to do more with less. These characteristics include:

	Crossfunctional collaboration	Organizations that were able to bring together various functions and functional leaders (CXOs) faster and more organically were able to make wellinformed and quicker decisions to respond to the challenges. The most innovative organizations build crossfunctional collaboration into the fabric of their operations.
	Resource sharing and talent agility	Better crosstraining programs and pooling of talent, with a greater range of skills while enabling specialization with standardization, improves ability to react to changes, shift work across the institution, and create employee retention strategies. This is a critical factor for longterm success.
	Digital integration and modernization	Digitization and standardization of processes enables flexibility in delivery location, team, and delivery partner. Continuing to operate on legacy systems that are not agile is no longer acceptable. Success lies in transitioning to the cloud, replacing legacy systems, and using digital tools.
	Seamless faculty/student/ employee experience	Seamless experience for students and faculty not only through use of collaboration tools and solutions but also by creating proactive mechanisms and channels for engaging with students and faculty.
	Data and information availability	Realtime digital reporting enables swift decisionmaking and predictive insights on possible trends with the ability to convert data into insights that can impact the organizational operations.
	Dynamic partner ecosystem	Ability to rely on a network of leading partners across the ecosystem increases flexibility and options for unforeseen circumstances while fueling innovation. More dynamic and nuanced organizational partnerships with ondemand or surge capabilities can improve resiliency and adaptability.
	Operational responsiveness	Clear decision matrix and defined business continuity and regular scenario testing enable future responsiveness and ability to shift work seamlessly.

These attributes are no longer “nice-to-haves,” but have become “must-haves” for institutions to operate successfully and thrive in the long run.

Enabling sustainable change

As higher education leaders continue to do more with less alongside the continued transition to cloud technologies, leaders are looking for ways to deliver the same or more value in support of the mission. This calls for a reimagination of how work is delivered across the enterprise. Work transformation requires four layers of evaluation for each enterprise function in an integrated way—either as a standalone strategic initiative or incorporated into larger transformation efforts to bolster the existing value proposition:

- 1** Evaluate the *inherent nature of work* to determine which parts are inherently transactional (operational and predictable) and which parts are strategic, analytical, and insight based.
- 2** Evaluate the *relationship to mission* to determine what work should be delivered centrally across multiple organizational units to drive economies of scale, versus what should be unique to the organization and tailored to the business or function.
- 3** Evaluate the *opportunity for technology* enablement to determine what activities are candidates for robotic process and intelligent automation or artificial intelligence. This enables distinguishing between primarily human-centric work and technology or machine-centric work.
- 4** Evaluate the *roles and business practices* to determine if there is proper alignment of accountability, responsibility, and authority across the organization. This ensures that correct processes are in place for work to get done efficiently.

Creating a roadmap with governance, defined roles and responsibilities and leveraging technology will help an organization adapt to challenges and thrive. Organizations have traditionally answered these questions in silos or isolation. Continuing to do so in a rapidly evolving, digitally disrupted, and integrated world, this can result in suboptimal results. Even institutions that have eliminated silos need to continue thinking about the future organization.

Success lies in integrating all these layers of evaluation up front to create a clear strategy with a supporting business case that connects the nature of work, its relationship to the mission, and opportunities to digitize or machine-enable work, while considering the roles and business practices within the organization. In doing so, the strategy for transformation of work can be far more sustainable and impactful.

Transforming your Administrative Functions

Every institution is unique in how it operates, and a one-size-fits-all solution does not work. Transforming administrative functions will depend on the organization's vision and overall business model. Both will drive how work is distributed and organized in the enterprise. The level of shift an organization undertakes will depend on the organization's current maturity, culture, and leadership, among other factors.

Consolidating, sharing, and standardizing work at the enterprise level can reduce redundancy among academic units. Standardization of certain processes and tools may also create efficiency, cost savings, and opportunity for automation. These impacts are multiplied by enterprise enabling-capabilities shared among functions. Most organizations have seen 10- 15% annual productivity improvement because of shared services consolidation.¹

The role of traditional back-office business support functions (e.g., Finance, IT, and HR) in organizations are changing as the role of digital expands, with machines and automation redefining work and its delivery. Service delivery models need to be re-imagined to improve agility, quality, and speed of mission enabling functions. A new model—the center office—re-frames mission support using enterprise-wide data and brings together cross-business talent to deliver common cross-functional capabilities such as automation, analytics, and continuous improvement as a service while being hyper-focused on customer experience. This back-office to center office shift is the next evolution of shared services and can help build the resilient and adaptable delivery models that are increasingly in demand.

Case in Point:

Rutgers University executed the Student Experience Improvement Initiative, a critical foundation by which the University worked to realize the goals established in the Strategic Plan, which are aligned with being a world class institution. The institution took a holistic and comprehensive approach to assessing and enhancing its student administrative functions across its central and campus units. Rutgers focused on understanding and improving student service levels, business processes, compliance risks, enabling technologies, and supporting organizational structures. The University drove tangible and measurable improvements to student service, driving an 84% overall student service satisfaction rate and resolving 83% of inquiries without escalation across over 200,000 inquiries, during about a 2-year period. Additionally, the institution strengthened its compliance environment and implemented more effective and strategic operations across its central and campus units.

What Does the Transformation Journey Look Like?

The length and complexity of the journey depends on your organizational aspirations and leadership ambition, where you are today, and where you need to be to achieve those goals. One size does not fit all.

However, there are certain common critical aspects to the journey:

- **Aligning leadership and stakeholders on a shared ambition** for the future state via facilitated sessions, translating it into a set of common goals (answer the “why change?” question) and strategic trade-offs required. This helps inform the level of shift and extent of reimagination that’s realistic.
- **Reimagining key elements of your operating model** by addressing fundamental questions we have discussed related to how work and services are delivered across the enterprise in an integrated way.
- **Understanding the implications for your workforce** such as the need for: reimagining roles (new and old) and labor pools; going beyond reskilling to resilience; balancing virtualization efficiencies with well-being, culture-building, and innovation; and facilitating cross-functional collaboration and measuring performance by outcomes—all leading to a hyper-focus on the human experience.
- **Understanding the implications for your workplace** in light of more nontraditional delivery and staffing models that the reimagined future enables. These may include the need for fit-for-purpose dynamic (on-demand) space availability leveraging a dynamic partner ecosystem, and workplace designs that are employee experience-centric.
- **Reevaluating your enabling capabilities** at a functional or enterprise level (for example, business performance management, governance, funding, business continuity, and culture) to determine readiness for the change as well as volume of shift to shape the roadmap to the future. For example, a shift to a more integrated operating model for an enterprise function may take longer if it doesn’t have the right level of cultural maturity or established mechanisms for collaborative decision-making and governance. Identifying the current and desired maturity of such capabilities can help determine the right path and timing for the transformation.

These are some prerequisites to help transformations be successful. Organizations embarking on large-scale ERP and technology implementations should address these fundamental questions and topics up front to help avoid unnecessary delays and overruns down the line.

Deloitte’s methodology will seek to identify how you may use each of the levels of technology, business practice, operation, and people to optimize investments, identify transformation opportunities to create an innovative sustainable service-oriented model for your organization.

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Endnotes and References

¹ Based on the Deloitte research report, GBS and shared services organizations moving forward: From pandemic to thriving, 2020.

² Deloitte, Global Shared Services Survey, 2019.

³ Deloitte, Automation with Intelligence: Reimagining the organisation in the 'Age of With', 2019.

⁴ Deloitte, Government Executives on AI, 2019

More information on workforce trends can be found in Deloitte's *Global Human Capital Trends 2020* and in the Deloitte and MIT Sloan Management Review 2020 Future of the Workforce report, "Opportunity marketplaces: Aligning workforce investment and value creation in the digital enterprise." More details on Technology trends can be found in in Deloitte's *Tech Trends 2020*. Additional case studies and frameworks can be found in the Deloitte's [The future is now: Reimagining operating models to thrive in the new normal](#).



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