

# A GROWTH AGENDA FOR WISCONSIN

## GROWING PEOPLE, JOBS, & COMMUNITIES

### *Growth Agenda Action Step #9:*

## Ramp Up Operational Excellence and Efficiency to Focus More Resources on the *Growth Agenda for Wisconsin*

**Brief summary:** To focus its limited resources on the Growth Agenda, the UW System is committed to keeping its administrative costs among the lowest in the nation. The university must take operational excellence to the next level through a business process redesign that will make the UW System an even more efficient system of higher education. Institutions are collaborating to identify business practices that can be standardized, streamlined, simplified, and automated systemwide. They are looking to other institutions of higher education as well as to the private sector to identify better ways to conduct business, while improving the UW System's service to students and the entire state.

### Progress to date:

A group of chief business officers from six UW institutions along with UW System Administration colleagues formed the Operational Excellence Working Group. Their objective was to develop initiatives to enhance existing efforts and allow UW institutions to manage ever greater workloads without new resources, enable the reallocation of resources to higher priority activities, and recognize excellence where it exists. The group pursued three ideas to meet these goals:

- **A systemwide series of Lean evaluation projects, a data-driven process that seeks to streamline administrative activities and encourage more standardized business processes:** Three multi-campus evaluation projects, relating to procurement card processing, non-salary payments to individuals, and travel expense reimbursements, are complete and have the potential to free up over 60,000 hours of staff time. Additional gains are anticipated as other institutions adopt the new, more streamlined approaches recommended by the Lean evaluation teams. The gains will allow staff to focus more of their energy on other high priority activities.
- **An innovation award program:** General guidelines for the program have been developed and shared with chief business officers. The Operational Excellence Working Group is ready to review proposals for administrative improvements.
- **A program that encourages and provides opportunities for UW employees who present on administrative improvements at professional conferences to share their expertise with UW System colleagues:** General guidelines have been developed and shared with chief business officers.

### Future plans:

- The Operational Excellence Working Group is planning a second round of multi-campus projects to share the Lean evaluation methodology more broadly across UW System institutions. In addition, individual institutions are developing campus-based Lean projects.
- The working group is reviewing efficiency initiatives undertaken at other university systems and institutions for ideas that may hold promise for the UW System. Potential ideas will be evaluated based on impact and achievability.

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