



University of Georgia

# Human Resources Assessment

**Final Report of Findings and Recommendations**

July 2020

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# Report Organization

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# Executive Summary

In recent years, the University of Georgia (UGA) has undergone significant, enterprise-wide changes to its human resource and financial systems, processes, and policies. UGA engaged Segal (previously known as Sibson Consulting) to conduct an assessment of the impact of these changes on the UGA community, with a primary emphasis on the central Human Resources (HR) function and the delivery of HR services university-wide. Key strengths and opportunities for improvement from the assessment are outlined in this report.

Over 250 members of the UGA community participated in the assessment. This included nearly all staff members of central HR, staff and faculty members outside of central HR performing HR-related functions, “customers” of HR (including faculty and staff), administrators, academic leaders, and the central HR leadership team. Nearly every person that participated in this process recognized the dedication and hard work of the staff members of central HR.

Most individuals also acknowledged the significant change management challenge of the transition to the OneUSG Connect platform, the single HR/Payroll solution for all University System of Georgia (USG) institutions. Although delays and setbacks are expected in any major system, process, or policy overhaul, the UGA community expressed acute attentiveness to the delivery of HR services, given the decentralization of HR work at the unit/departmental level.

Conservative estimates suggest that at least two hundred separate individuals, widely-distributed at UGA with less than half in central HR, have some element of HR-related tasks or responsibility. Our analysis suggests that opportunities exist to build on recent gains and provide more consistent HR support, improve service levels, expedite processing times, and increase quality. Inconsistencies in operating procedures and limited coordination between central and distributed HR practitioners – albeit improved with the new team structure – contributes to this challenge. This level of decentralization also presents institutional risk, since those with HR responsibilities have varying levels of skills and competencies, and therefore HR policy and procedures are not practiced consistently across all departments.

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# Executive Summary *continued*

Managing a distributed network in a period of significant change poses challenges to even the most mature and sophisticated HR organizations. The UGA HR organization has traditionally operated primarily as a compliance-related and transactional function, rather than strategic partner. This operational approach is generally perceived as a barrier to progress which, from a customer perspective, lacks a sense of urgency.

While central HR communicates with their HR Liaisons in the field, the HR Liaisons group consists of the “chief” HR practitioner in the school/college/unit and does not reach the extended network with HR-related responsibilities. This may account for the view expressed in interviews of a lack of regular and transparent communication, creating an opportunity to improve trust levels both within HR itself and between central HR and the rest of the UGA community. Despite recent business improvements, many HR processes are still generally perceived as slow and ambiguous, with a lack of visibility into the status. Many participants shared examples of “bottlenecks” due to lack of delegation of authority in decision-making processes.

Faculty and staff participating in the assessment expressed reserved optimism that some HR services are improving. The teams or pods that HR created in early FY20 have been welcomed as an improved method of communication to resolve issues. The UGA community recognized the strength of the UGA Search Group and its efforts to recruit high value talent. Leadership within UGA Finance & Administration has also dedicated significant resources to improving central HR and has committed to taking the steps needed to advance the delivery of HR services on campus.

This report includes several recommendations to transform and enhance HR service and delivery at both the central office and unit/department level. The primary recommendation is to implement a best practice HR business partner model that would improve the strategic and consultative delivery of HR services centrally and increase the unit/department level of HR knowledge and standardization. Central HR should also undertake a strategic planning initiative to review and revisit the mission, vision, strategy, and goals for the HR function at UGA. Segal is also recommending that UGA consider approaches to increase HR partnerships and knowledge transfer within central HR, as well as between central HR and distributed schools, colleges, and units. These and other recommendations are outlined in greater detail below.

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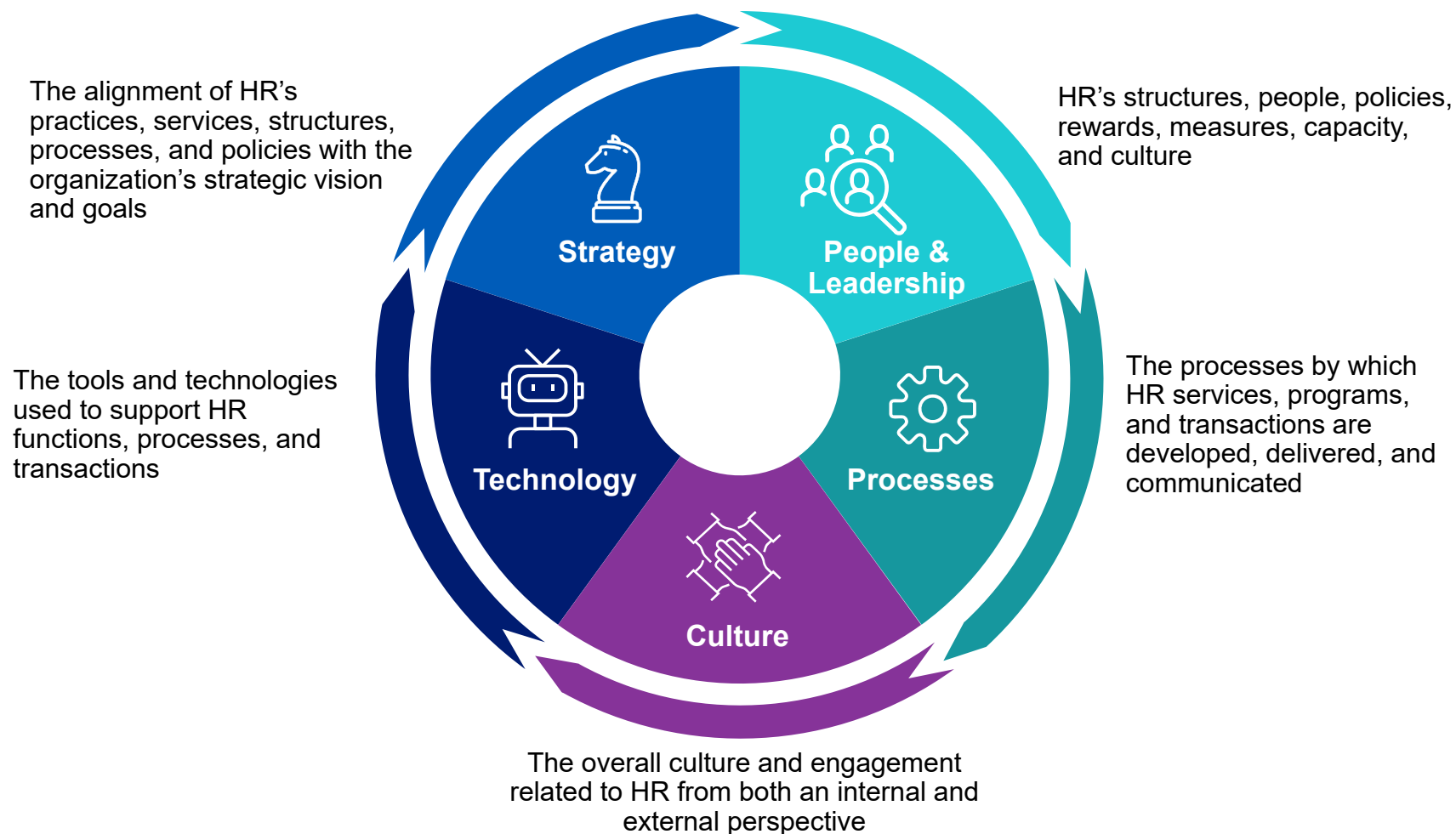
# Background and Context

**To fully understand the HR function at UGA, Segal performed the following tasks:**

- Conducted a comprehensive data request and review
- Held a kick-off meeting with the entire central HR team to introduce the engagement and the project goals, methodologies, and outcomes
- Facilitated one-on-one interviews, small group interviews, focus groups, and open forums with over 250 stakeholders between November 2019 and February 2020 from the following constituent groups:
  - Staff members from the central HR Department, including front line staff and their respective directors;
  - Staff and faculty members outside of central HR performing HR-related functions;
  - “Customers” of HR, including both faculty and staff members;
  - Administrators and other campus leaders, including representatives from Finance and Administration, Payroll, EOO, Staff Council, and Legal Affairs;
  - Academic leaders, including Deans and Provost’s Office; and
  - Central HR leadership team
- Drafted a comprehensive report of detailed strengths and opportunities for improvement, with the common themes from the interview, focus group, and forum phase of the project
- Provided detailed recommendations to address the assessed strengths and opportunities for improvement, together with a road map for next steps in implementing the recommendations

# Background and Context

The Human Resources Assessment surfaced strengths and opportunities for improvement from each of the following dimensions as they relate to Human Resources at UGA:



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# Strengths

**Several significant areas of strength offer opportunities to build upon for the future:**

**The campus community recognizes and values the commitment of central HR staff members**

- Central HR staff are credited as being dedicated, caring, and hard working
- Stakeholders recognized that the people within central HR want to provide the best service to their customers and serve the University as a whole

**UGA Search Group is very high functioning and efficient**

- The UGA Search Group's processes, methodology, and streamlined execution of executive and unique position recruitment is recognized as high functioning, and a model to be emulated

**The implementation of the HR teams/pods is widely seen as a step in the right direction**

- Stakeholders who directly interact with HR noted that, although the people in the pods may be less experienced and/or are still ramping up with training, they are happy to have a single point of contact to go to for questions and resolutions
- The units also appreciate direct access to a group of central HR staff who are dedicated to their unit and know the intricacies of their unique structures and needs

**Training and Development (T&D) provides excellent offerings and service to campus**

- Many T&D customers want to see continued growth in this area because of the high level of quality/service
- The T&D staff are perceived to be well-prepared and helpful to those seeking to take or develop courses

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# Strengths

*continued...*

## **Employee Relations has strong experience and expertise in their service offerings**

- Although perceived as understaffed given the total number of staff on campus, employee relations generally delivers quality work, high levels of customer service, broad institutional knowledge, and care to their customers' cases

## **HR Senior Directors appear to have good working relationships with each other and are generally well respected and perceived to be hard-working by their teams**

- With the assistance of an outside coach, the HR Senior Directors have become more collaborative and less siloed in their approach to resolving issues

## **Conversion to the OneUSG Connect system has shown some progress since “go-live”**

- Many individuals outside of HR recognized the value of implementing new systems, as well as better position management with UGAJobs

## **Despite historical issues with background check vendors, the campus has experienced some stabilization and improved processing times with the current vendor**

- Although vendor selection is made by the USG system office, the UGA campus looks to central HR to be responsible for issues related to background checks

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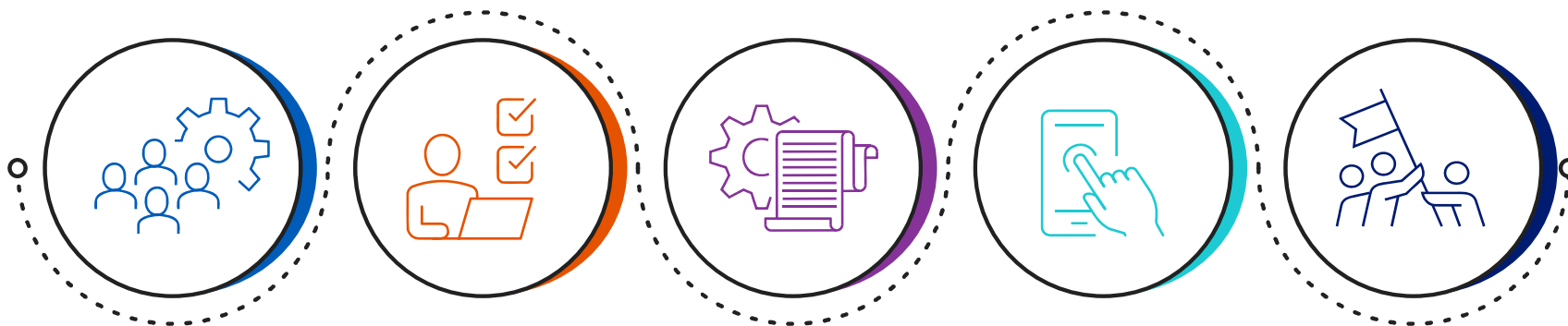
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# Summary of Opportunities for Improvement

The assessment of UGA's HR function and the delivery of HR services campus-wide identified opportunities for improvement in each of the previously identified dimensions of Strategy, Processes & Policies, Technology, People & Leadership, and Culture. The following is a summary of those opportunities in each dimension:



## Structure and Service Delivery Model

The current HR structure and service delivery model could be adjusted to reduce legal risk and reduce financial cost to the institution.

## HR Competencies

Resolving internal challenges within central HR will improve HR services and support.

## Processes and Policies

Many HR processes are time consuming and lack status visibility. HR policies could be more clearly defined, better communicated or formally documented, and more easily accessible.

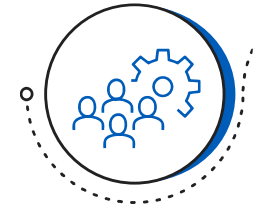
## Technology

The decentralized HR model has added challenges in change management efforts for new systems implementations. Limited tools are available to solve system problems, and tools are only partially integrated.

## Culture

Perceptions of HR culture include disconnection, lack of cohesion between units, and lack of collaboration.

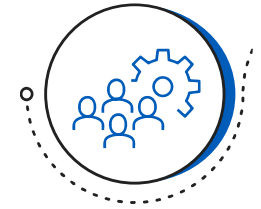
# HR Structure and Service Delivery Model



- The structure of UGA's HR service delivery model is widely-distributed, resulting in inconsistent delivery of HR support and service
- The current HR structure and service delivery model could be adjusted to reduce legal risk and reduce financial cost to the institution
- Adjusting the current HR structure would make HR processes more efficient and improve delivery of HR support
- The existing HR model can result in unclear and at times conflicting governance and authority for HR matters
- These tensions are magnified by efforts to centralize or retain central decision-making authority, and a lack of delegation for certain basic HR functions
- Many faculty HR matters are handled through Academic Affairs (e.g., employee relations issues). Opportunities exist for better input, integration, collaboration, and coordination with central HR.

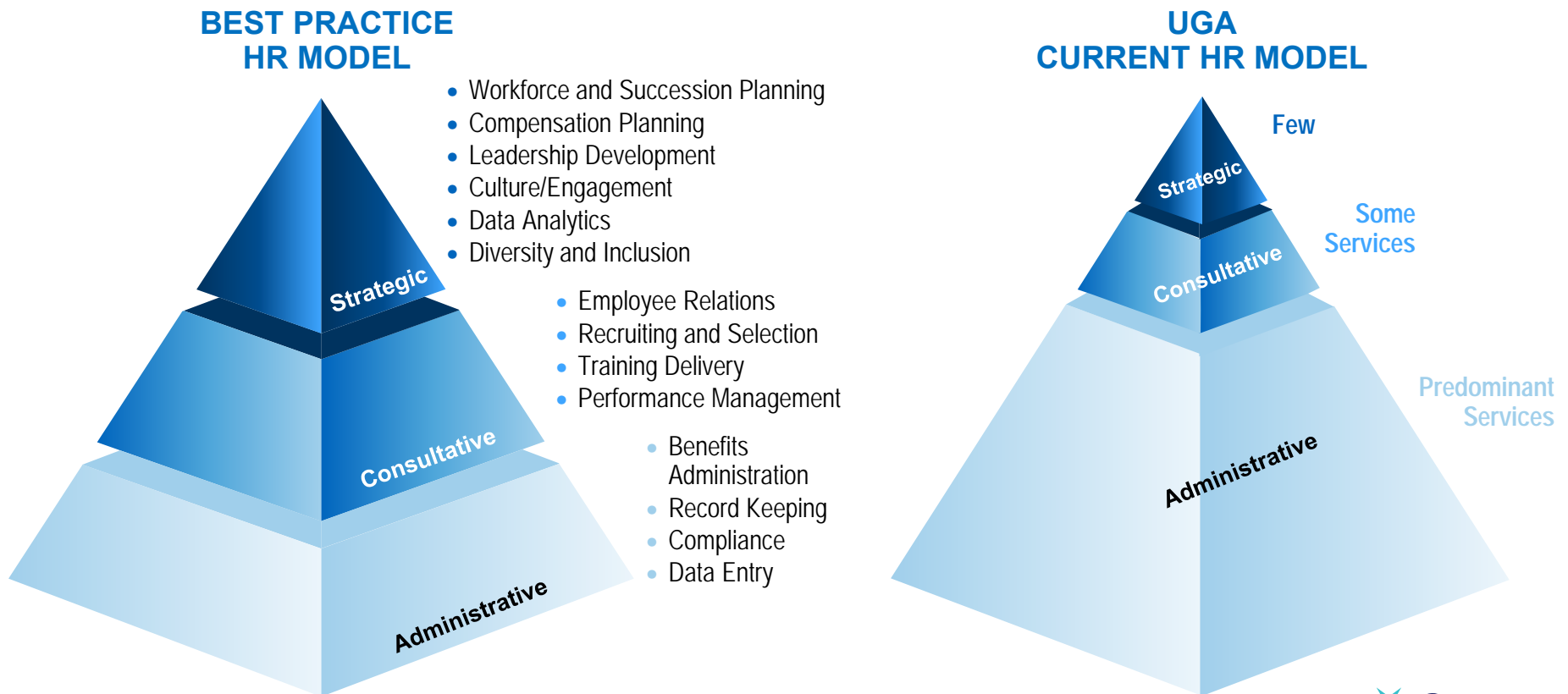
# HR Structure and Service Delivery Model

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**Central HR operates in a largely transactional manner, with limited strategic services reflective of a best practice HR function**

- Central HR staff and resources predominantly support transactional HR services, often at a granular level
  - In order to support the University’s strategic mission and vision, HR must evolve the organization to provide a greater level of strategic and consultative services



# HR Competencies



- **Limited task delegation and heavy emphasis on day-to-day transactions or issues are among challenges that can negatively impact HR services and support.**
- **Anticipated improvement in these areas is expected with the hiring of the HR Deputy Director**
- **Stakeholders perceive a lack of customer service focus as a chief priority, which can dampen satisfaction rates, slow processing times, and add cost**
- **The HR leadership team acknowledges opportunity to improve in this area, but largely attributes this to the dedication of resources needed to complete the system implementation and provide stabilization**
- **The central HR team has grown dramatically in size in recent years, using limited-term positions to specifically address the OneUSG Connect system implementation, but opportunities exist to hone and develop long-term staffing and related competencies to meet UGA's needs**
  - **While some of these recently added positions are temporary or “limited term,” and the deadline for these terms having been extended in the past, current service levels rely on these limited-term staff**

# Processes and Policies



- **Opportunities exist to make several processes more efficient, less cumbersome, less manual, and more transparent to core HR stakeholders**
- **Background checks have historically been a major pain point in the hiring process, although some progress has been made in processing times**
- **Student hiring and retention processes frustrate stakeholders**
- **Despite improvement, the perception is that hiring and onboarding is still too slow and lacks stakeholder visibility**
- **Several onboarding processes, like verification of I-9's and visa and/or immigration status checks, are inconsistent across units, which poses significant risk to the university**
- **Job data changes produce delays due to manual entry**
- **The policy environment could benefit from clear governance and structure**
- **There is a perception among stakeholders that central HR does not consistently enforce the same policies, practices, and processes across all UGA schools, colleges, and units, including HR's own operations. Prior to this engagement, central HR implemented corrective actions to address these perceptions and confirm that policies, practices, and processes are consistently followed and enforced.**
- **Based on current policies, leaders and hiring managers find it difficult to attract and retain good talent**
- **There is a lack of clarity in how employee relations matters are managed**



# Technology



- Over the course of FY20, the community has seen improvements; however, the implementation of the OneUSG Connect human capital management platform (HCM) was noted as an ongoing source of frustration, though UGA is still within the normal stabilization and optimization window
- The USG shared services team, while motivated to learn, is not familiar with the complexities of UGA. Tickets are often triaged to UGA, at which point individuals may be passed from team to team several more times before eventually reaching someone who can solve the problem
- The various trouble ticketing systems are reportedly ambiguous, inconsistent, and ineffective. Multiple service desks (Finance, HR, OneUSG, etc.) exist, and users must call different numbers with different protocols and operating procedures. Further, ticketing platforms also vary (i.e., Service Now and Team Dynamix), with limited SLA reporting, aging metrics, and similar infrastructure for leaders to use to improve turnaround times
- Current reporting tools on positions, employees, and other job data are not sufficient to support the needs of the unit's business

# Culture – Communication



- **Opportunities exist to improve communication frequency and transparency in order to build trust between central HR and UGA stakeholders, as well as internally within central HR**
- **To remedy perceived communication gaps or the need for more follow-through, UGA stakeholders seek help from either the Provost’s office or senior leaders within F&A to act as intermediaries, creating a cycle of additional pressure and cultural challenges for HR team members**
- **Central HR has opportunities to develop internal communications systems and plans**
- **Central HR has opportunities to improve its reputation and brand**
- **HR should pursue a dedicated vehicle to communicate with the campus**
- **HR should focus significant time and resources on change management strategy for campus-wide changes**
- **HR should clearly define commonly shared and understood strategy, mission, vision, or objectives**
- **Central HR could make staff feel more connected with their department as a whole. This is an opportunity both inside – employee engagement within central HR – and outside, in further cultivating relationships with units across campus**

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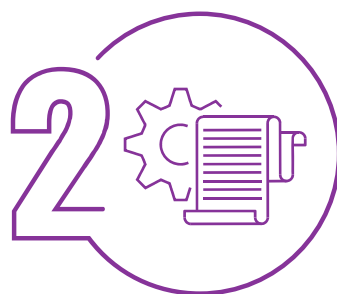
# Summary of Recommendations

Based on these strengths and opportunities, the following recommendations are intended to address each of the core dimensions of the assessment. The following is a summary of the recommendations associated with each dimension:



## Launch HR Transformation Initiative

Launch a formal HR Transformation Initiative to redesign the HR structure at UGA. Consider HR Business Partner Model to enable and provide strategic and consultative HR support and services.



## Reengineer HR Processes

Reengineer HR processes to increase efficiencies and create more capacity within HR. Provide greater visibility into HR processes and eliminate delays.



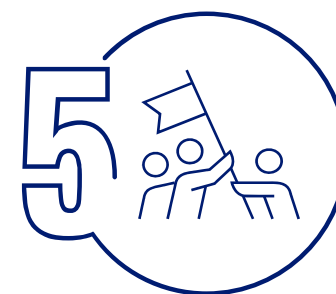
## Reimagine change management resources

Provide reimagined change management training and resources to address lingering frustrations over implementation of OneUSG Connect platform and reduce processing times and error rates.



## Elevate HR Competencies

Elevate HR competencies by expanding learning & development opportunities and providing continuing leadership coaching to HR senior leaders to improve skills and promote delegation.



## Launch HR strategic planning process

Launch a strategic planning process to identify HR's mission, vision, strategy, and goals. Develop a plan to address cultural issues within HR and improve reputation of HR on UGA campus.

# Recommendations

## *Structure and Delivery Model – Part A*



- **Launch a formal HR Transformation process to redesign the HR structure at UGA**

- Design and prioritize long-term strategic HR service offerings not fully addressed by the current HR model
  - New or expanded HR services and offerings may include:
    - Strategic recruiting
    - Enhanced onboarding
    - Strategic workforce planning
    - Succession planning
    - Retention, culture, and engagement strategies
    - Strategic compensation
    - Expanded training and development, especially leadership development
    - Change management support
    - Employer branding
- Develop a staffing and development plan to support the future model
  - Staffing model should consider staff capacity gained from redesign of HR processes and implementation of technology through OneUSG Connect and expanded use of UGA Jobs
  - Develop competency models that outline expected skills, competencies, and accountabilities
  - Conduct a skill GAP analysis of current HR talent against role definitions and competency models
- Develop clearly defined roles and responsibilities across all HR functions
  - Ensure role clarity and minimize the degree of overlap in responsibilities
  - Review and revise job descriptions to accurately portray individual duties
    - This should include obtaining updated requirements and job descriptions from the system

# Recommendations

## *Structure and Delivery Model – Part B*



- **Consider moving to a best practice HR business partner model to reshape the HR presence and provide true strategic and consultative HR support to campus leadership**
  - Create deep and consistent HR competencies and capacities across UGA through the development of a network of embedded HR Business Partners that would:
    - Be responsible for a wide range of consultative HR services delivered at the unit level, including but not limited to:
      - Strategic recruiting strategy and hiring
      - Workforce and succession planning
      - Expanded training and development, especially leadership development
      - Culture and engagement strategy and support
    - Allow for greater alignment and integration of HR efforts across the campus, while ensuring direct, effective HR support at the local level
  - Explore establishment of shared services to streamline and merge HR and other transactions, including potential creation of an HR service center and other Centers of Excellence
  - Evolve teams/pods to align with evolving HR Business Partner model and expanded strategic focus of HR
    - Leverage teams/pods to produce elevated customer service levels though increased competencies of team/pod members achieved through improved training and development opportunities

# Recommendations

## *Processes and Policies – Part A*



- **Reengineer HR processes and review policies to increase efficiencies, create capacity to provide more strategic services, and reduce turnaround times and institutional risk**
  - Expand current efforts and launch a cross-functional working group of HR staff and relevant stakeholders to map and reengineer HR processes to reduce manual transactions and identify opportunities for gained efficiencies and capacity
    - Consider further streamlining processes that were identified as burdensome:
      - Background checks
      - Student hiring
      - Staff hiring
      - Onboarding
      - Job data changes
  - Create guides for critical HR processes that can be used within HR for cross-training to increase capacity
  - Identify opportunities for utilizing new technology or enhancing current technology
  - Review current policies and implement standards and accountabilities for all policies to be upheld across the University consistently

# Recommendations

## *Processes and Policies – Part B*

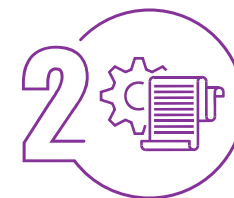


- **Provide greater visibility into the status of all HR processes through use of dashboards and/or greater direct feedback communication from central HR staff**
  - Implement visibility dashboards, wherever feasible, to all HR processes
    - Add additional resources within central HR tasked with providing updates to stakeholders regarding the status of HR processes, where use of dashboards is not feasible
    - Where necessary, provide enhanced training to existing central HR staff on communication techniques and approaches on their respective functions
  - Address lingering background check issues
    - Working with background check vendor and USG, provide greater visibility into status of background checks and work to eliminate contact with applicants via spam-like e-mail or other communications
    - Provide greater training to unit HR professionals on tips and techniques to improve applicant compliance with background check process and speed processing times
  - Develop communication and education plan for hiring of student workers
    - Provide greater training to unit HR professionals on the hiring of student workers
    - Create learning and development training and education for research faculty and other supervisors of student workers regarding student employment pay practices



# Recommendations

## *Processes and Policies – Part C*



- **Develop a more robust employment policy environment**

- Create employment policy governance structure with charge to update existing policies and create new policies or delete existing ones as needed
  - Convene a standing or an ad hoc committee tasked with regularly updating (preferably not more than every two years) all UGA employment policies, practices, and procedures, with input from relevant stakeholders
    - Stakeholders should include participants familiar with both the UGA and USG policy environment, with regular check-ins to ensure policies are not out-of-step or fostering competing organizational cultures
  - As needed, engage internal and external subject matter experts to provide input on policy updates/additions, and empower “owner” of policy update initiative within organization
    - Subject matter experts will likely include UGA counsel, USG counsel, and potentially outside legal counsel with direct experience with State of Georgia and USG rules, regulations, and statutes
    - Policy owner should be a senior member of central HR leadership team (typically chief HR officer or deputy director of HR) who is granted sufficient authority to affect and manage changes in HR policy and practices
  - Consider creation of UGA culture manual (as a supplement to employee policy handbook) to express mission and vision of HR organization
- Establish policy to address hierarchy of decision-making related to employee relations matters, including resolution of disagreements between ER, EOO, and Legal

# Recommendations

## *Technology*



- **Provide reimagined change management training and support to address lingering frustrations over implementation of OneUSG Connect platform and reduce processing times and error rates**
  - Reimagine change management training and communication tools to address gaps in knowledge contributing to increased processing times to complete transactions and high error rates
  - In consultation with USG shared services office, consolidate trouble ticketing systems to single platform to eliminate duplicate tickets from stakeholders
    - Create task force charged with interfacing between UGA and USG to provide shared services office with a better understanding of unique needs and concerns of UGA community
  - Task central HR with increased advocacy with USG system office to address outstanding concerns in short term, rather than waiting for all system entities to “go live”
  - Provide greater direct access to HRIS reports, especially among HR business partners in new model, to eliminate delays

# Recommendations

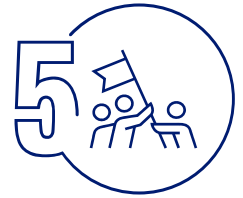
## *Elevate HR Competencies*



- **Expand Learning and Development Opportunities**
  - Establish greater learning and development opportunities for staff members of central HR, especially among members of teams/pods
    - Develop library of core skills and competencies for all team/pod members
    - Provide protected time for central HR staff members to pursue learning and development opportunities without necessity of taking personal time
- **Provide continuing leadership coaching for Senior HR leaders, with special emphasis on evolving to strategic and consultative activities aligned to new HR model**
  - Clearly define role and job description for Deputy HR Director to provide greater opportunity for HR Associate Vice President to engage in strategic and consultative activities
    - Task Deputy Director with empowerment of HR Senior Directors to delegate more decisions to mid-level managers and directors
- **Develop a budget model for HR that addresses limited-term central HR staffing requirements and long-term organizational needs**
  - Identify knowledge gaps within HR and create hiring plan to fill gaps
    - Consideration should be given to existing limited term staff members to fill gaps, where appropriate
      - Identify core needs of central HR post-implementation of OneUSG Connect platform
    - Shift existing implementation roles to strategic and consultative roles, where possible, and to transactional roles, where needed
    - Create career ladders within central HR and among distributed HR Business Partner network

# Recommendations

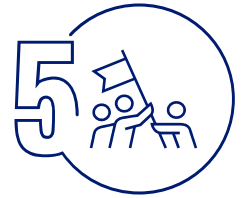
## *Culture – Part A*



- **Launch a strategic planning process to clearly establish the mission, vision, strategy, and goals for the UGA HR function**
  - Develop a clear mission and vision for HR to guide future services, priorities, and initiatives that align to the University’s vision and goals, as well as workforce needs
  - Consider engaging key stakeholders outside of HR in the process
    - Clearly identify the role of HR and the mission for the future
    - Identify key imperatives for HR to achieve its vision
      - Ensure that these imperatives are aligned with the broader UGA and USG goals, and that HR is positioned as a leader for the movement
    - Identify key goals and objectives and identify clear priorities and investments required to support the strategic plan
    - Identify accountabilities and metrics for strategic initiatives
  - Establish an implementation plan with a timeline and key milestones for all changes
    - Rebrand HR and develop a change management and communication plan to support the new HR organization and plan
    - As HR transforms, develop an appropriate balance between maintaining the customer service oriented approach of HR that is greatly desired, while professionalizing and gaining efficiencies across the function
    - Set service level expectations with customers
      - Of particular importance is response times – “customers” of HR should have a clear understanding when someone will respond back to them about an issue or provide an update
      - Ensure sufficient communication, education, and training for changes to processes, systems, and self-service

# Recommendations

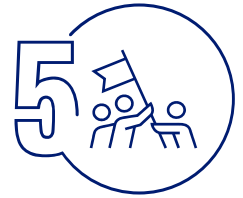
## *Culture – Part B*



- **Establish a plan to address cultural issues present within HR and more broadly**
  - Build camaraderie and address morale within the HR organization
    - Create a plan for greater collaboration, communication, and hand-offs between the senior HR leaders and central HR staff in order to foster strong morale across the team
      - Consider holding regular HR staff meetings to solicit greater opportunities for feedback and to promote team building experiences
      - Solicit recommendations from the HR team for increasing open communication and ensuring more two-way communication
    - Facilitate team building activities
  - Develop a pilot Rewards and Recognition Program within central HR, and later expand to include broader University community
    - The program should capture the spirit of UGA’s values and desired culture, and would seek to accomplish the following:
      - Establish a culture of appreciation
      - Address the perception of staff feeling undervalued for their contributions and unable to achieve upward mobility or increased compensation
      - Guide leaders and staff on how to effectively demonstrate appreciation and encourage them to do so
    - Provide the University community with a robust range of options and tools to easily recognize the contributions and achievements of the staff

# Recommendations

## *Culture – Part C*



- **Address the reputation of HR across the UGA community**

- Build trust and confidence across the UGA community through consistently applying policies and processes, increasing communication, and sharing the new strategic plan and service offerings
  - Elevate the level of professionalism of the HR staff by providing service training
  - Address the reputation of long turnaround times by developing service level agreements to ensure timely support and promote accountability
  - Regularly solicit feedback from stakeholders to help inform future improvement efforts
- Consider engaging an unbiased third party vendor or develop internal engagement surveys to measure and drive engagement levels across the University
  - Ensure that engagement survey efforts are confidential and used to build trust
  - Seek support and buy-in from managers in engagement survey process and demonstrate process value
  - Establish an approach for action planning and addressing engagement survey outcomes across the University designed to demonstrate follow through on findings
  - Provide ongoing survey tools or processes to examine whether engagement levels are improving

# Recommendations

## *Culture – Part D*



- **Develop an HR Marketing Plan**

- Develop a marketing and branding strategy and campaign to market new HR vision, mission, model, services, and roles
  - Identify a senior-level qualified communications professional to oversee and manage all HR communications, both internally within central HR and externally
  - Identify qualified communications professional(s) to coordinate communications efforts, including the HR website, HR newsletter, changes in policies and procedures, etc.
  - Broadly communicate and promote messages and materials using a diverse range of mechanisms (roadshow, new employee orientation, campus communications, etc.)
  - Announce and articulate the HR Transformation Initiative and key organizational changes
  - Develop and launch programs and events that elevate awareness of HR services/programs
  - Consider formal “Employer of Choice” initiative to improve external employer brand

# Next Steps

## *Suggested Approach*



- Launch HR Transformation Initiative
- Develop HR Business Partner structure and model, and determine short and long-term staffing plan
- Reengineer HR processes and provide greater visibility into status
- Develop robust policy environment and governance structure
- Provide reimagined change management training and support for implementation of OneUSG Connect
- Elevate HR competencies
- Launch a formal HR strategic planning process to establish the mission and vision for HR, and improve HR culture
- Create HR marketing plan and address reputation of HR across campus

- Implement new and expanding roles within HR organizational structure
- Design and implement expanded learning and development within HR T&D
- Clearly communicate the mission, vision, strategy, and goals of the new HR strategic plan
- Evaluate and implement consistent application of policies
- Launch HR rebranding effort through marketing plan
- Address cultural barriers within HR
- Develop and implement communication plan for updated employment policies
- Provide greater access to HRIS data
- Implement process visibility improvements

- Expand training and development opportunities across UGA
- Continue working towards the developed HR strategic plan
- Continue to add new and expanded strategic offerings
- Implement long-term staffing plan
- Reconvene employment policy committee and update policies
- Create and invest in team building opportunities for HR staff
- Expand Rewards and Recognition Program campus wide
- Develop surveys to measure engagement levels across campus



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# HR Unit-Specific Feedback

The following pages discuss findings and feedback related to the individual functional units within HR

## **Employee Relations**

- Many reported great satisfaction with the responsiveness and level of detail the staff in employee relations provide to their customers, despite the sense that the unit is understaffed for the size of institution
- The employee relations staff is considered knowledgeable and skilled, and the senior director is seen by most as a competent leader and conversant with institutional knowledge of staff relations across campus
- Concerns arose over the fact that very minimal information is documented, and that while not everything in an employee relations matter will be documented, more basic case tracking is necessary
- Concerns were also raised about the limitation of scope of employee relations to just staff, despite unit titles that suggest coverage of both faculty and staff relations, raising concerns over uniform policy application
- Several campus stakeholders identified instances when employee relations, Legal, and EOO were not providing consistent or coordinated advice, causing customers to choose among competing opinions

## **Compensation and Classification**

- Customers reported limited support in making compensation and classification related decisions, resulting in the perception that compensation and classifications are inconsistent and inequitable across campus
- Stakeholders reported a lack of insight into how pay and title decisions are made, and lack awareness of the policies relied upon to support those decisions
- Benchmarking data is not readily available to help units across campus make more strategically informed decisions for their positions

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# HR Unit-Specific Feedback

## **Benefits**

- The online benefits portal is reportedly working well and relatively easy to navigate
- Customers shared instances of the Benefits team delivering potentially conflicting advice or simply incorrect benefits information
- The ability to schedule appointments with a Benefits staff person is seen by some as difficult
- Some expressed concerns on responsiveness with TPA Alight

## **Training and Development (T&D)**

- Customers across the institution reported positive feedback for the T&D unit as a whole
- The T&D staff are willing to help the units with training and development program content development and delivery, and are dedicated to delivering great quality to their customers
- Stakeholders across the institution acknowledge that the function is small in terms of staffing, but would like to see the function grow and be more supportive to units in the development of T&D programs
- Customers would like to see more leadership development and manager/supervisor training programs

## **UGA Search Group**

- Stakeholders who have worked with this unit reported very positive feedback regarding the timeliness and support given in the search for executive or unique roles
- The function is described to be extremely efficient, responsible, timely, professional, and knowledgeable

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# HR Unit-Specific Feedback

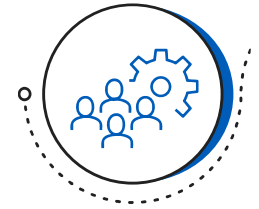
## HRIS

- The HRIS team is described as supportive and working towards providing the necessary data to the units as best as they can, while still trying to clean up data issues from the system conversion
- Although there are frustrations regarding the availability and access to data, many customers reported timely responses to report requests from the HRIS team
- Units across campus reported the inability to access data that they have previously been able to access directly and use in the past with the legacy system
- Data are given to units via query reports, but the data do not always serve the intended purpose and, in some cases, questions have arisen about report/data accuracy

## Service Desk

- There are multiple mechanisms and platforms to voice HR-related issues and inquiries, which contributes to heightened sense of ambiguity and unresponsiveness
- In many cases, customers do not know what method is best to inquire about HR issues, nor do they trust that their inquiries will be handled with a sense of urgency or care
- Customers typically reach out with inquiries that require immediate response and attention, which is not typically matched by the average responsive time for resolutions
- Customers will often submit their ticket to multiple systems and contact someone they know in HR directly
- Many customers described the ticketing mechanisms as a “black hole,” as often tickets are misrouted, go long periods of time without a response, or are resolved without an accurate solution

# HR Structure and Service Delivery Model



## **The structure of UGA's HR service delivery model is widely-distributed, resulting in inconsistent delivery of HR support and services**

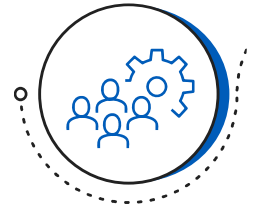
- UGA has a highly distributed HR model with multiple and, at times, inconsistent points of delivery across the institution
  - Reportedly, 110 staff at the departmental level perform aspects of HR, most with additional responsibilities for budget, finance, and other administrative tasks
  - These individuals have varying levels of HR skills and competencies, which has the potential to result in inconsistent HR support, uneven service levels, suboptimal processing times or quality
  - These distributed practitioners are not formally or informally integrated with central HR and do not report centrally or have other consistent reporting lines, causing potential inconsistencies in HR practices, guidance, and application of policies

## **The current HR structure and service delivery model has the potential to create undue and unnecessary legal risk and increased financial cost to the institution**

- This inconsistent delivery of HR support and services in the following areas has caused differing standards that directly contribute to added institutional risk and cost:
  - Hiring
  - Job Titling
  - Compensation and Classification
  - Staff / Faculty Relations
  - Promotion
  - Rewards and Recognition
  - Professional Development
  - HR Governance / Authority

# HR Structure and Service Delivery Model

*continued...*



## The current HR structure could be more efficient in terms of HR processes and delivery of HR support

- Given UGA's distributed model, there are numerous users/system managers of the new human capital management system known as OneUSG Connect
  - This widely dispersed set of system users results in varied levels of proficiency, high error rates, and longer turnaround times
  - The OneUSG Connect system was designed to support a centralized HR structure as is seen in most USG institutions where many of the system roles/responsibilities are held by the central HR Office
    - UGA has historically distributed these roles much more widely across the schools, colleges, and units, due to UGA's size and complexity
  - The USG shared services office is challenged to provide Tier 2 support to UGA's highly distributed group of system users and initiators, as it is largely structured for a more centralized HR environment

## The existing HR model has the potential to result in unclear and conflicting governance and authority for HR matters

- A tension exists between central HR's attempts to centralize or retain control over many HR decisions and the belief in many units that they possess the requisite HR skills and competency to make critical decisions
  - Some unit HR professionals (many of whom previously worked in central HR) have more experience than central HR representatives and could perform a broader array of HR functions for their unit
    - The newly formed teams/pods are often staffed with the newest and least experienced members of central HR staff, limiting their capacity to respond to questions from units
  - Unit HR professionals believe they could improve processing times, if vested with greater authority to perform HR functions in a decentralized manner

# HR Structure and Service Delivery Model

*continued...*



**These tensions are magnified by efforts of central HR leadership to centralize or retain decision-making authority, and a perception that basic HR functions are not being delegated**

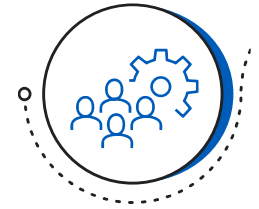
- Central HR staff are often placed in the position of advising unit stakeholders that they will have to get back to them on critical and time-sensitive decisions
  - Only the most senior level HR staff can make final decisions on certain matters, causing bottlenecks, delays, and frustrations

**Many faculty HR matters are handled through Academic Affairs (e.g., employee relations issues), with limited input, integration, collaboration, or coordination with central HR**

- Not all academic units have direct and easy access to HR professionals that understand the unique needs and culture of their school or program
- This can result in inconsistent practices related to setting compensation, an inability to assess trends, and an uneven application of policies, resulting in potential risk and liability

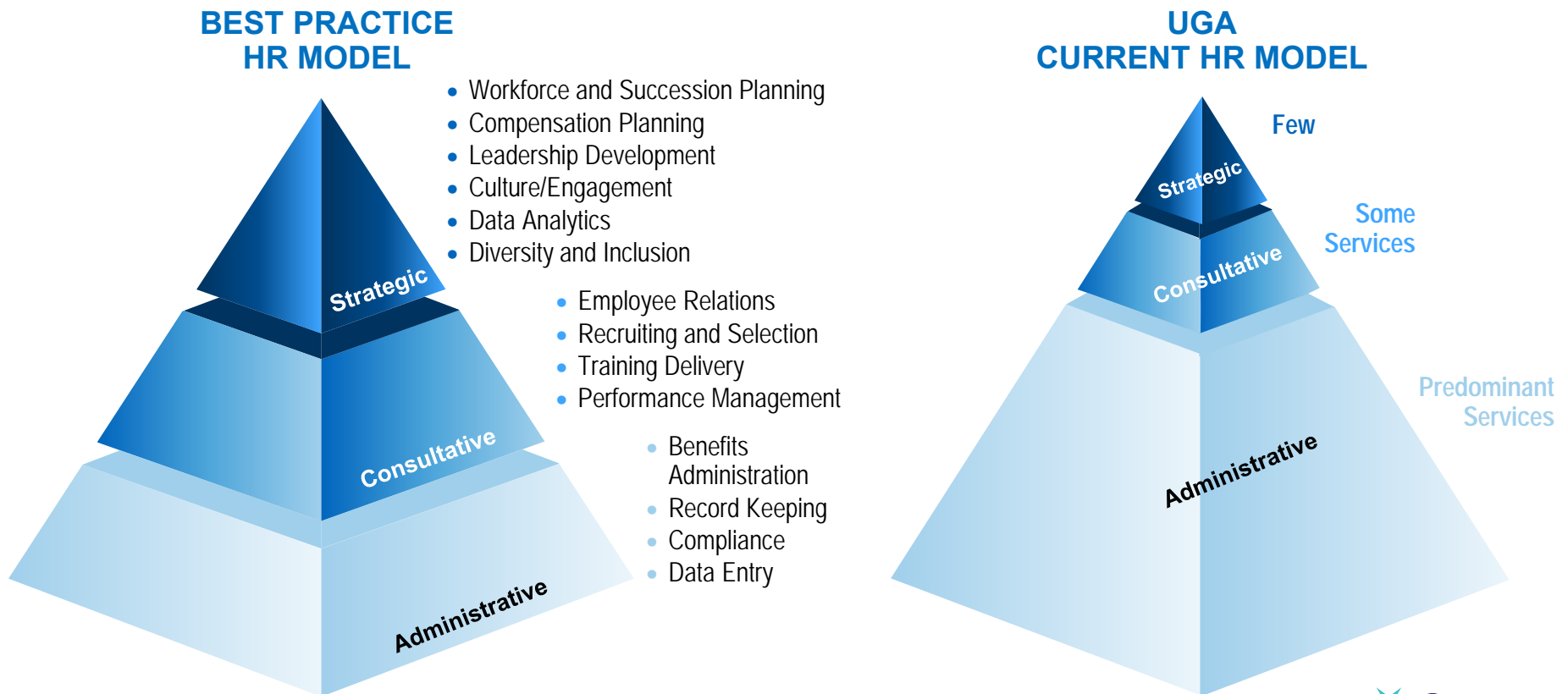
# HR Structure and Service Delivery Model

*continued...*



**Central HR operates in a largely transactional manner, with limited strategic services reflective of a best practice HR function**

- Central HR staff and resources predominantly support transactional HR services, often at a granular level
  - In order to support the University’s strategic mission and vision, HR must evolve the organization to provide a greater level of strategic and consultative services





# HR Structure and Service Delivery Model

*continued...*



**Central HR operates in a largely transactional manner, with limited strategic services reflective of a best practice HR function** *continued...*

- Stakeholders and leaders identified a need for a range of critical strategic HR support and related services, including:
  - Strategic recruiting
  - Enhanced onboarding
  - Strategic workforce planning
  - Succession planning
  - Retention, culture, and engagement strategies
  - Strategic compensation
  - Expanded training and development, especially leadership development
  - Change management support
  - Employer branding

# HR Competencies



## Challenges are negatively impacting HR services and support

- Many staff and faculty members commented favorably on the depth of knowledge the AVP of HR has and how much he cares about his employees
  - However, faculty and academic and administrative stakeholder groups expressed concerns whether HR leadership has the experience, bandwidth, or resources to lead HR through a comprehensive HR structure and service delivery transformation

## Challenges exist with task delegation and heavy emphasis on day-to-day transactions or issues

- Senior leaders across UGA frequently follow-up or proactively attempt to get answers from HR, including from HR senior leadership, to check on the status of pending inquiries
  - Any time an inquiry is made into an existing inquiry, it multiplies transaction volume and increases overall workload, exacerbating processing time challenges
- This can lead to diminished levels of trust and confidence for HR and its leadership due to gaps in communication, follow-up, or reliability

## Anticipated improvement in these areas is expected with the hiring of the HR Deputy Director

- Several stakeholders expressed optimism that the recently created and filled role of HR Deputy Director will help to alleviate some of the concerns expressed around task delegation and strategic focus

# HR Competencies

*continued...*



## **Stakeholders perceive a lack of customer service focus as a chief priority, which can dampen satisfaction rates, slow processing times and add cost**

- The UGA community perceives HR to be a compliance-based function, rather than focused on providing high levels of customer service
  - These perceptions include a lack of the consultative expertise, customer service, and proactive guidance desired by end-users
  - While many recognized that HR should be ensuring compliance, the perception is that the compliance-based focus has become a singular goal and loses sight of the “people” aspect of delivering HR services
  - Stakeholders report that central HR would benefit from establishing service level agreements (SLAs) that would aid in managing the expectations of the UGA community while promoting accountability among its own staff

## **The HR leadership team acknowledges this opportunity to improve customer service focus, but largely attributes this to the dedication of resources needed to complete the system implementation and provide stabilization**

- HR leadership anticipates that a decreased focus on system transition requirements in the near future will permit prioritization of customer service

# HR Competencies

*continued...*



**The central HR team has grown dramatically in size in recent years to address the HCM system implementation, but there is opportunity to build requisite competencies to meet UGA's needs**

- There has been a significant investment in central HR, with a sizeable increase in the number of staff members, primarily term-limited staff, in the last few years to meet the needs of system implementation and initial transitions
  - While these positions may have been necessary to address the immediate volume of work, a high growth rate in a short period of time may not produce individuals who are capable of handling the same type of volume or complexity of issues at first
  - This may be a reason why many stakeholders believe that central HR is understaffed, given slow processes and delayed communication
    - Given the large number of additional staff hired in recent years, central HR likely has more than sufficient staffing levels, but a greater need for improved skills and competencies

**Some of these recently added positions are temporary or “limited term,” with multiple extension requests**

- Limited term HR staff and their managers/supervisors have expressed frustration and conveyed associated departmental tensions about the potential loss of employment at “term” end
  - Given these tensions, there have been high rates of turnover, and the lack of long-term reliability of these positions has reportedly caused staff to leave the unit or UGA entirely
- Many of these limited-term positions may not need to be refilled following the resolution of system implementation issues, or could be redeployed to other functions

# Processes and Policies – HR Processes



**Opportunities exist to make several processes more efficient, less cumbersome, less manual, and more transparent to stakeholders**

- The most challenging HR processes cited by interviewees include:
  - Background checks
  - Student hiring
  - Staff hiring
  - Onboarding, and
  - Job data changes

**Background checks have historically been a major pain point in the hiring process, although some progress has been made in processing times**

- While many concerns were raised about the background check vendors, most individuals recognized that vendor selection is a USG system office decision outside of UGA's control
- Although processing times have improved, the background check process still reportedly takes several weeks to complete, with limited visibility into the process
  - This leads to difficulties in keeping candidates updated and creates risk in losing candidates
  - Vendor e-mails are often not consistently responded to in a timely manner or go unseen, as the e-mail either appears to be spam or is sent to an applicant's spam folder, causing additional process delays

# Processes and Policies – HR Processes

*continued...*



## Student hiring and retention processes frustrate stakeholders

- With the implementation of OneUSG Connect and broader use of UGAJobs for position management, hiring student workers now requires the similar steps as hiring regular staff
  - Admittedly, the former student hiring process carried risk to UGA, but it also set a challenging expectation to maintain now that risk is mitigated
- Delays in the student hiring process or changes in funding sources have reportedly resulted in missed or delayed payments, causing financial stress and hardships, especially among graduate students
  - This has produced frustration among faculty members and staff who manage or supervise these students, and concern for the students' financial well-being
- Gaps in information about proper student hiring processes exist in several units/departments

## Many hiring and onboarding processes remain slow and lack visibility to stakeholders

- Hiring managers report it can take several months to hire an employee
  - Based on a prior analysis done internally at UGA, some of the perceived delays do not reside in central HR, but rather within or at the distributed unit level, with background checks accounting for some delays
    - However, given the lack of communication, follow-up, and visibility into the process, neither the units nor HR clearly understand where the bottlenecks occur
- Stakeholders uniformly expressed a desire for greater visibility into processes
  - Faculty and staff conveyed that they often do not know what stage a given process is in, and rarely receive status reports from central HR to keep them updated on progress, necessitating regular follow-up

# Processes and Policies – HR Processes

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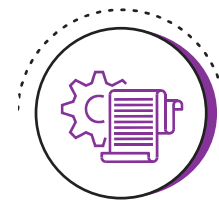
**Several onboarding processes, like verification of I-9's and visa and/or immigration status checks, are inconsistent across units, which pose a significant risk to the university**

- Both central HR and the units advocate for centralizing this process to ensure consistency, compliance, and accurate job data (e.g., SSN, birth date)

**Job data changes produce delays due to manual entry**

- Relatively minor job data changes, like changes to start dates, “reports to,” and dual appointments, have caused delays due to manual data entry requirements

# Processes and Policies – HR Policies



## The policy environment could benefit from clear governance and structure

- Documented, up-to-date policies and guidelines are not always available and accessible to the UGA community
  - Staff and faculty expressed a desire to have a centralized place to get all information related to HR (e.g., updates, policies and guidelines, communications, benefits)
    - The HR webpage currently does not provide sufficient information or links to HR-related information, policies, procedures, and guidelines
  - Many stakeholders reported that they do not know when specific changes to policies or procedures are made, or are unaware of general changes in HR
    - This has produced inconsistent, contradictory, and/or inaccurate information

## There is a perception among stakeholders that central HR does not consistently enforce the same policies, practices, and processes across all UGA schools, colleges, and units, including HR's own operations.

- Some members of central HR reported instances of perceived favoritism within central HR with respect to promotions and salary increases
- Decentralized HR staff feel that they are forced to follow guidelines and policies from HR, but do not always see the central HR office following the same policies or procedures

## Prior to this engagement, central HR implemented corrective actions to address these perceptions and confirm that policies, practices, and processes are consistently followed and enforced.



# Processes and Policies – HR Policies

*continued...*



## Leaders and hiring managers find it difficult to attract and retain good talent

- Managers reported employing workarounds to provide increased compensation to direct reports, in place of merit increases or promotion
  - Given policy limitations related to increases in compensation and promotion, managers are forced to reclassify jobs based on additional job duties or elevated responsibilities
    - This workaround is a time-consuming process, but is often undertaken to avoid losing staff to other units on campus or from UGA
- Historically, UGA has reportedly offered what some employees believe to be less competitive compensation packages, causing talented employees to leave the institution due to low levels of pay, lack of rewards and recognition, and the absence of defined career paths

## There is a lack of clarity in how employee relations matters are managed

- There is reportedly disagreement in approach and handling of employee relations issues and guidance given to the campus among employee relations (ER), the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO), and the Office of Legal Affairs (Legal)
  - Customers report having to use their own judgment to decipher and ultimately decide for themselves which unit's advice to follow (i.e., ER, EOO, or Legal)
    - Stakeholders are looking for ER, EOO, and Legal to work together to reach an agreed upon solution and provide the customer with one consensus answer
      - If a consensus cannot be reached, campus stakeholders should know who ultimately has the final decision-making authority in a given situation, which is currently unclear

# Technology



Over the course of FY20, the community has seen improvements; however, the implementation of the OneUSG Connect human capital management platform (HCM) was noted as an ongoing source of frustration, though UGA is still within the normal stabilization and optimization window.

- The transition from an antiquated legacy personnel and payroll system to a more modernized, integrated Human Resources system created a steep learning curve for many users across the entire campus
  - UGA’s legacy system was perceived by some as more flexible and customizable to a large base of individual users, and was well understood by most users after decades of experience
    - The legacy system was not a true HCM system and therefore many users were not familiar with what those systems are capable of when fully implemented
  - The conversion also came on the heels of the 2016 FLSA changes and other implementations of financial enterprise systems, causing a campus-wide feeling of “change fatigue”
- Most stakeholders reported an awareness that implementation of the OneUSG Connect system was a USG-wide initiative to place all USG institutions on a common HR/Payroll platform
- While a number of improvements were made in FY20, especially after the Georgia Tech go-live (some were on hold before this), a number of enhancement opportunities still exist
  - Many feel that UGA has the responsibility to address these problems now and play a greater advocacy role with the USG system office to see these issues resolved

**The USG shared services team, while motivated to learn, is not familiar with the complexities of UGA**

- The shared services call center cannot always provide the appropriate level of service to UGA customers
  - Trouble tickets may not be routed accurately, or inconsistent advice is given

# Technology

*continued...*



**The various trouble ticketing systems are reportedly ambiguous, inconsistent, and ineffective. Multiple service desks (Finance, HR, OneUSG, etc.) exist, so users must call different numbers with different protocols and operating procedures. Further, ticketing platforms also vary (i.e., Service Now and Team Dynamix), with limited SLA reporting, aging metrics, and similar infrastructure for leaders to use to improve turnaround times.**

- The ticketing systems were designed to support a more centralized HR service delivery model, and the highly distributed nature of HR at UGA has made implementation challenging
  - As a result, customers are trying to find workarounds or use shadow systems
- Stakeholders reported a lack of awareness whether to use HRweb, TeamDynamix, or the OneUSG ServiceNow ticketing systems to resolve certain problems
  - Many users admitted to submitting multiple tickets to various systems simultaneously, as well as making efforts to directly contact HR to advance concerns on an expedited basis
    - Some tickets can take months to resolve or are “resolved” without an agreed upon solution

**Current reporting tools on positions, employees, and other job data are not sufficient to support the needs of the unit’s business**

- With the new system, staff must request queried reports for job data, which is information that they had direct access to previously in the legacy system
  - Departments believe direct access to the data would promote smoother processes

# Culture – Communication



**Opportunities exist to improve communication frequency and transparency in order to build trust between central HR and UGA stakeholders, as well as internally within central HR**

- Several UGA stakeholders reported instances of a lack of responsiveness to initial inquiries about HR-related problems and concerns
  - This often occurs when matters cannot be resolved by one of the teams/pods and when using one (or more) of the ticketing systems
- When initial inquiries fail to produce a timely response, campus stakeholders escalate their efforts by attempting to contact senior leaders within HR
  - However, these efforts may produce delays in response or no response

**To remedy perceived communication gaps or need for more follow-through, UGA stakeholders seek help from either the Provost’s office or senior leaders within F&A to act as intermediaries, creating a cycle of additional pressure and cultural challenges for HR team members**

- As a result, members of the Provost’s Office and senior leaders in F&A dedicate additional time to address outstanding HR issues
  - This causes representatives from both offices to report feeling overburdened and frustrated

# Culture – Communication

*continued...*



## **Central HR needs to develop internal communications systems and plans**

- Members of the senior HR leadership team and the next tier of directors could benefit from regularly scheduled meetings with their direct reports
  - Even among those that schedule regular meetings, these are often cancelled, leaving their direct reports without clear guidance on priorities or strategy for the sub-unit
  - Central HR department as a whole should meet together to communicate on mission and vision of the unit
- HR customers are reportedly frustrated when central HR staff admit they do not know who to direct them to because they do not know each other (yet work in the same department)

## **Central HR has opportunities to improve its reputation and brand**

- Central HR’s reputation has been negatively impacted by several recent examples of what was perceived by the campus community as poorly handled or poorly communicated matters, including:
  - The conversion of certain staff from exempt to non-exempt status following the 2016 FLSA changes
  - The distribution of information regarding the “critical hire” memo from the State/USG
  - The hiring status, start date, and job duties of the new central HR Deputy Director
  - Changes in HR policies and processes since “go-live” of the OneUSG Connect platform

# Culture – Communication

*continued...*



## **HR should pursue a dedicated vehicle to communicate with the campus**

- Central HR has very few resources or staff dedicated to communications, and those few staff charged with responsibility for communications could benefit from more authority or professional expertise to convey key messages
- Prior to implementation of the OneUSG Connect platform, central HR had no consistent platform (i.e., newsletter, e-mail, forum, or other device) to communicate with the campus
  - OneSource weekly status calls and “Tuesday Tips” have evolved to cover a broader range of HR-related issues
  - The increased scope and length of these calls and emails has made it more difficult for stakeholders to focus on materials relevant to their specific job responsibilities

## **HR should focus significant time and resources on change management strategy for campus-wide changes**

- The University has experienced tremendous change over the last few years, and HR should work to build the infrastructure throughout the institution to allow for nimble and innovative thinking and improve execution of human resource change initiatives

# Culture



## **HR should clearly define commonly shared and understood strategy, mission, vision, or objectives**

- HR should define a clear and commonly shared mission, vision, strategy, and guiding principles
  - Both central HR staff members and campus stakeholders could not articulate a shared sense of direction in what the HR department wants to achieve
    - Central HR staff members could not articulate the strategy, mission, vision, or objectives of their own department, other than reflecting on a sense of constant triage and reactivity
  - Absence of guiding principles also limits HR's ability to effectively address the challenges it faces, including enterprise-wide system changes
    - This also reduces campus stakeholder confidence that challenges in HR will be adequately addressed

## **Employee engagement is an area of opportunity where central HR could make staff feel more connected with the HR department as a whole, within their units, and with individual units across campus**

- There is opportunity to build a sense of community, cohesion, and collaboration among central HR staff and unit staff members
  - Central HR staff and units are located in different buildings, which hinders the feelings of community between all HR staff
  - Given the large influx of HR staff, physical spaces dedicated to HR have become overcrowded
    - Some central HR staff members deal with customers in crowded conference room spaces and are unable to offer the level of privacy preferred to attend to personnel matters
- As a result, the department has experienced a high rate of turnover, as people move to other departments on campus or on to other organizations