

Data Collection and Comparison

Shining a light on administrative services at USask and how they support our teaching and research mission.



USask is committed to continuously improving our support to our world-class research, scholarly and artistic work, and academic mission.

The **Administrative Services Renewal (ASR) Initiative** team is using robust quantitative and qualitative data from various sources to shine a light on the current administrative environment at USask. This includes the USask Employee Engagement Survey, the UniForum Benchmarking Project, and institutional systems. Ensuring functional reviews are data-informed and supported by contextual and strategic conversations with deans, executive directors, and unit leaders is imperative as we identify opportunities for service delivery alignment.

USask Employee Engagement Survey Feedback

In March 2023, USask faculty and staff were invited to participate in an Employee Engagement Survey, conducted by McLean & Company. The online survey was an opportunity for employees to share their valued insights and feedback about working at USask. In total, more than 2,500 faculty and staff completed the survey representing nearly 40% of the employees at USask, with representation from all colleges, schools, and

administrative units.

The survey responses provided a comprehensive picture of the general state of engagement among our faculty and staff, along with a set of identified areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement and development within our organization. For example:

- **Career Development, Advancement and Collaboration** - Employees expressed a desire to be provided with more opportunities for career growth and development as well as access to more online learning and development. The need for greater collaboration between colleges, schools, and units was noted as well as references to disconnects that exist between units and teams who operate in “silos.”
- **Culture: Recognition, Work/Life Balance, Workplace Environment** - There were several comments that related to a need for more frequent and meaningful recognition of faculty and staff and a greater emphasis on work/life balance specifically since incidences of burnout and work overload seem to have climbed.
- **Leadership** - There were many comments expressing appreciation that these surveys provide feedback

opportunities for faculty and staff, but frustration with the lack of action and follow-through on surveys. Respondents also showed appreciation for the extraordinary challenges leaders at USask (at all levels) had been navigating over the past few years but as a result, many leaders have competing priorities and demands for their time and attention which inhibits their leadership effectiveness.

The ASR Initiative team is reviewing the employee engagement survey results within the context of the ASR Administrative Network Project and the ASR Communications and Marketing Project to see where progress can be made to address areas of concern identified through the survey findings. The team will also look for opportunities to advance employee resources, and identify areas for improved professional training and career development.

Through the ASR Initiative, USask has the opportunity to nurture a supportive, networked, and integrated organization that fosters well-being, a community of practice, and provides career development opportunities for our administrative professionals, while alleviating the amount of time faculty spend on administrative tasks.

UniForum Benchmarking Project

As one of 26 Horizons Project initiatives, the UniForum Benchmarking Project is helping USask make data-based decisions to find efficiencies and opportunities for improvement as part of our commitment to being one of Canada’s top research-intensive universities.

At USask, the structures and processes that support our administrative services have evolved over time and have been impacted by many factors including enrolment and campus growth, increased standards, and the implementation of the shared services model.

To help us understand how our administrative services support our mission, USask entered into Cubane Consulting’s UniForum Benchmarking Program (UniForum) to gather information and insight on the distribution of administrative services, resources, and activities at our campus. This commitment is currently for a six year period and will provide USask with an opportunity to assess our administrative operations against our peers over a multi-year timeframe using a



rigorous process and comparative data.

Did you know: UniForum is currently working with over 50 participating post-secondary institutions worldwide—25 universities in Australia and New Zealand, 24 in the United Kingdom, and eight in Canada, six of which belong to the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities.

In 2021, under the UniForum program, USask launched a two-step process to gather information—one aimed at collecting data on administrative services and how and where they are delivered and at what cost, and the other, a survey focused on service effectiveness by assessing satisfaction levels of both end-users (i.e., faculty and staff) and service providers. As part of the first step, supplier costs for external vendors were also considered.

Administrative services included in the UniForum surveys and analysis include

general administration, governance and institutional management, finance, human resources, information technology, facilities management, external engagement, student support and services, library and research advisory services, teaching administration, and research administration.

Collecting this data is helping USask gain a better understanding of our administrative operations, how these services align with our mission and strategic priorities, and what matters most to students, faculty, and staff when improving service delivery. This foundational work also helped identify where additional information and conversations are needed to enhance the overall experience for our campus community.

The **Administrative Network Project** and the **Communications and Marketing Project** are using UniForum findings related to specific administrative support activities, to provide insight into question such as:

- Where are administrative support services being delivered across USask?
- Where is the opportunity to collaborate to ensure the right people are doing the right work?
- Where is there opportunity to refocus time

and attention for greater service delivery?

Further analysis and conversations are underway to gain additional insight into the findings.