

**Administration & Finance Program Reviews**  
**Sample Alternate Cycle Program Review #2**  
(Updated Spring, 2017)

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**James Madison University**

**Division of Administration & Finance**



**Alternate Cycle Program Review**

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Prepared by:

The alternate cycle program review for

updated and submitted all requested documentation to include: Mission, Vision and Values statements, current and past (Appendix 1) goals and objectives and the SWOT analysis and responses conducted on and the prior unit SWOT responses.

### **Mission Statement**

The staff of supports the process of planning, acquiring, and managing of capital assets of the university.

### **Vision Statement**

will accomplish the highest value improvements possible to in order to provide a

### **Values Statement**

In the creation and implementation of will demonstrate that we value

- ***Ethical behavior*** towards all parties whether an internal or external component of our community;
- ***Engagement*** of individuals and groups in the design and construction processes to both foster and benefit from a shared open process for defining and accomplishing campus improvements;
- ***Respect*** for individuals, community, the shared and differing perspectives of people affected by our projects and for the traditions and values of the University.

### **SWOT results**

#### **Strengths:**

1. **Historical and professional knowledge base of the departmental staff** – is dependent upon the ability to adapt to a broad spectrum of programs, processes and procurement methodologies within the state system. The presence of a staff team with diverse professional backgrounds and with a firm background in the legal, regulatory and bureaucratic intricacies of the Commonwealth's system is paramount to the department's success. This sort of expertise is not something that can be gained on an as needed or short turnaround basis.

2. **Personal and professional relationship with regulatory agency staff members** – the ability to proactively accomplish the review and approval process for [REDACTED] is entirely dependent upon a good working relationship with the [REDACTED]. Substantial work has been done over the last fifteen years to establish a personal rapport between the department staff and the staffs of these agencies.
3. **Reputation** – the individual staff members of [REDACTED] and the organization itself have worked diligently to gain a professional standing in the [REDACTED] in the Commonwealth. A decade and a half of work pursuing a course that treats all parties fairly, works communally for the greater good, and which holds honesty and integrity in the highest regard has paid off in developing an enviable reputation within the professional community. This results in excellent participation by [REDACTED].
4. **Commitment and dedication of departmental staff** – in an organization which operates with very limited resources it is crucial that staff is motivated and willing to bounce from project to project or to put their own assignments aside to assist co-workers when project circumstances require.
5. **Loyalty of staff** – the fact that the majority of [REDACTED] staff have remained in their positions for quite some time is a testament to their loyalty to the department. In an environment where private sector positions pay substantially more, have lesser workloads, and have little compunction to avoid enticement other entities' employees into their fold, the staff of [REDACTED] have stayed with the department.

**Weaknesses:**

1. **Under-staffed** – compared to the other comparable higher education institutions within the Commonwealth this department is substantially understaffed. This fact is brought home even more to the staff when it is recognized that over the past fifteen years [REDACTED] has more than doubled while the number of departmental positions has been diminished by nearly half. The inability of project management and inspection staff to spend the appropriate amount of time on individual projects puts JMU at risk of problems going undiscovered and/or unresolved. In addition, by putting staff in the position that they are unable to spend adequate time on project issues an atmosphere which diminishes any perceived chance for professional development, interaction between staff to share knowledge, and the proper pre and post project functions which best practices require. The lack of personnel also creates an environment where cross training, use of staff to assist in proactive data collection and assessment in [REDACTED], warranty follow-up, the assessment of lessons learned on completed projects, the cooperative team management of projects and the growth of staff into more managerial functions is impossible. The risk of losing staff to burnout is extreme, and with the current staffing level. With the recent loss of one project

inspection position to early retirement, [REDACTED] is at the point of being unable to adapt to the imposition of additional individual workload should the number of projects increase.

**Imposed Systems** – While maintaining forward progress on multiple projects, project managers and inspectors have had to adapt on the fly to the Commonwealth’s implantation of several systems. [REDACTED]

3. **Insufficient Training** – as noted in item 1 above, the imposed workload has, for all practical purposes, made sufficient training impossible. [REDACTED] has maintained its ability to accomplish project management at the expense of all other ancillary support activities. Professional development in the areas of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This puts JMU at risk as we are eroding the effectiveness of our staff. We are dealing with consultants, contractors, vendors and regulatory staffs who are more up-to-date and better trained than we now are. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This should not imply that staff is averse to training; rather they are intent upon managing assigned projects and reluctant to further overload coworkers.

4. **Insufficient Accounting Information** – [REDACTED] Despite the expenditure of significant funds and [REDACTED] over the past four years, this is still accomplished in the absence of adequate, reconcilable, accessible data regarding budgets and accounting. There is still no way for a project manager or the director to obtain timely accounting information in a format which supports our activities. While a new computer based system has been procured and installed it is still not fully implemented, therefore instead of having the equivalent of a balance sheet, ledger and journal for each project, we are still reliant upon a collection of individual manual spreadsheets which do not have the ability to be fully reconciled to all aspects of expenditure or encumbrance, which lack the ability to drill down on detailed transactional information, and which cannot be manipulated to allow any sort of comparison by type, history or trends. Progress has been made, but until the new system contains current reliable reconcilable data staff is not becoming proficient in its use as they are still reliant on the old spreadsheets.

5. **Insufficient technical support for** [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] The lack of a phased multiple user platform for sharing this information makes the authoring, tracking, managing and post project use of this information extremely difficult, very labor intensive and exposes JMU to substantial risk in the areas of budgetary control,

procurement workforce utilization, oversight and project accomplishment. Where [REDACTED] budgets are now multimillion dollar endeavors it makes little sense to amplify the risks involved by forcing the management of this aspect on to manual disconnected spreadsheets which are reproduced in whole or in part several times over the course of the project as it passes between responsible areas.

6. **Insufficient Building & Infrastructure Information** – [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Documentation is incomplete, in only paper format, not accessible from a common point, and unreliable. This delays projects, creates situations where [REDACTED] are based upon “best memories”, and exposes JMU to repeated instances of risks when imposed project issues and changes happen, as well as contributing an even more substantial risk in JMU’s inability to quickly access building information in an emergency situation.

### Opportunities:

1. **Changes in technology** – a variety of new software, web based systems and devices are now available for use in [REDACTED]. Staff is gaining exposure to these systems where [REDACTED] are utilizing them. [REDACTED] should embrace this technology to allow shared information, eliminate or mitigate duplication and to shift some of the document preparation and data entry to [REDACTED].
2. **Changing [REDACTED]** – the Commonwealth has expanded the palette of [REDACTED] for use. Given proper training and staffing the growth of staff expertise in these areas would allow much more tailored solutions to be implemented for individual projects. [REDACTED] is a prime example of a new methodology which, where properly managed, could benefit the university.
3. **Evolving Project Management Practices** – the use of shared technology in meetings, distribution of communications, project record keeping, etc. presents the prospect of [REDACTED] developing new and better methodologies for project management. The use of electronic methodology for drawing and specification reviews, the use of computer animation and simulations for [REDACTED], the ability to use electronic data retention to enable cross-project and historical comparisons of similar projects and issues, etc. are all chances for improvement.
4. **Tier 3 Delegated Authority** – While the full impact is yet to be understood, the probability of the University gaining additional delegated authority in [REDACTED] presents many opportunities for growth and improvement.

### Threats:

1. **Diminished performance by contracted professionals** – the level of performance, quality of produced documents, expertise in [REDACTED] and general overall commitment to serve customers has severely declined within the [REDACTED]. More and more of the management and quality control are being imposed upon the owner. This places severe pressure on the University’s project management staff, especially when their assigned workload has continued to increase due to other factors. Additional resources and additional training are critical if we are to even be able to support the status quo regarding quality control.
2. **Expanded Regulatory Environment** – It is more and more apparent that the level of regulation and the related bureaucracies is expanding. More and more time is spent achieving and documenting this facet of project management. This inevitably imposes a higher and higher level of [REDACTED] delay if there is an unforeseen issue.
3. **Aging workforce** – A good portion of the staff within [REDACTED] is approaching the retirement qualification threshold within the next five to ten years. The knowledge base in all facets of our scope of services will be severely depleted with the loss of any one of these individuals let alone multiple people. There is no current provision or methodology to begin to initiate and train possible [REDACTED]. This issue plays very much into item 1 above, in that accomplishing staff retention within a group eligible for retirement is entirely dependent upon fostering their individual happiness and sense of belonging. We do not have the luxury of existing in an environment where society or the economy imposes a place bound mentality on our workforce; the ability to leave is a known factor in assessing and promoting employee satisfaction.
4. **Lack of external resources** – In the current and forecasted economies there are several shortages which will impact [REDACTED] ability to succeed; these include:
  - Anticipated state budget constraints on the quantity of projects and the size of project budgets;
  - a dwindling pool of qualified applicants for managerial and staff positions related to [REDACTED]
  - the regionalization of markets for specific [REDACTED] diminishing availability and affordability of skill sets;
  - the market driven inability of various professionals, i.e. [REDACTED]
- The market driven scarcity of materials and products, which seems to be a volatile mercurial pattern which defies logical mapping and prediction, continues to make the design and budgeting aspects of [REDACTED] more and more difficult. This pattern is predicted to continue for the foreseeable future; and
- The push of sustainable design to reward “local” production of materials and elements seems to be creating a pinch point by diminishing the availability of related products.
5. **Conflict between forecasted budgets and actual costs** – Prior years experienced an unpredictable volatility in the [REDACTED] which impacted [REDACTED]

ability to adequately forecast costs for projects. That aspect is still present but is now compounded by an almost universal inability to procure cost reliable cost projections from [REDACTED]

This issue makes it mandatory that [REDACTED] evolve the expertise and resources necessary to pre-plan [REDACTED] to a greater degree prior to the generation of [REDACTED]. A formal process is necessary to define scope, costs, and accomplishment methodologies for anticipated projects. This will necessitate the earlier initiation of the budgetary process and the dedication of more staffing resources to the tasks.

### **Objectives entered into the Planning Database as a result of the SWOT**

- [REDACTED] will continue to work towards implantation, development and practical use of a centralized project management computerized system. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] will incorporate the use of shared technology in meetings, distribution of communications, project record keeping, etc. The use of electronic methodology for drawing and specification reviews, the management of the use of [REDACTED], etc. are all elements to be explored and implemented where possible. Any such system must be compatible with [REDACTED].

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The [REDACTED] department is performing as effectively as possible with the current staff. The department is experienced, professional and loyal.

#### **Technology -** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It was initially implemented during the [REDACTED] for use by all areas in [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The task of assessing, planning and implementing the remaining modules (scheduling, document retention and reporting) will require someone who is thoroughly familiar with [REDACTED] processes and business practices to be able to logically and efficiently set up the system. Until the system is fully integrated, [REDACTED] is operating through a manual paper process. Most critical to this implementation is [REDACTED]

**Personnel** - During the past year, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Conclusions and Recommendations** - This is a critical time for the university with multiple [REDACTED] as well as in progress. We concur with the SWOT objectives and the importance of the full implementation of the [REDACTED] as soon as possible. We recommend that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] coordinate the completion of this project.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



## Appendix 1

### **Prior Unit Program Review Recommendations/Objectives**

1. Research and review with [REDACTED] to ascertain if the new [REDACTED] system can adequately accommodate budgeting and procurement needs of [REDACTED] and if not, research other systems that could accomplish these tasks.
  - a. COMPLETED
2. Develop a JMU resource manual or series of manuals which provides resources, i.e. department contacts, policies and procedures, general timelines, FAQs, and expectations of users. An option to achieve this recommendation is to contact the [REDACTED] for assistance through a grad student/intern project and/or class project.
  - a. ONGOING – resources gathered for project committee members describing both [REDACTED] and also descriptions of internal processes.
3. From the inception of the project, explain to end users how the budget process works and encourage them to ask questions. Be sure to communicate with end users any good or bad news as soon as possible. Customers have indicated that any communication is better than none.
  - a. COMPLETED
4. Improve staff communication by encouraging and facilitating staff to actively participate in regular staff meetings and developing teamwork strategies by meeting at the conclusion of each project to explore “lessons learned”.
  - a. COMPLETED – weekly internal and communal staff meetings are held each week and attended by all staff
5. Develop a process for communicating major changes, work disruptions and unforeseen issues to upper management to avoid misunderstandings and surprises.
  - a. ONGOING – biweekly report has been revised and continues to evolve
6. Utilize the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) within the University’s Performance Evaluation Process to document a professional development plan for each employee and evaluate to see that professional development goals are met.
  - a. COMPLETED
7. Appointment of a staff member as “second in command” so that when the Director is absent or not available, there is no confusion about who a staff member or customer can call for assistance.

- a. NOT INSTITUTED
- 8. Improve communication to customers by appointing an [REDACTED] contact/customer service person to coordinate all communications and face-to-face meetings during [REDACTED] making sure that the end users understand their responsibilities throughout the project and are aware of proper procedures and processes to follow after project “handoff” during the warranty period.
  - a. COMPLETED
- 9. Investigate the possibility of reconfiguring the current space to allow for full wall/door offices. If this is not possible in the current location, limit the use of the conference room only for [REDACTED] as a place for staff to meet with outside vendors and clients and to assure that private space is available for use by [REDACTED] when needed.
  - a. COMPLETED – Department relocated to spaces previously housing Human Resources
- 10. Investigate using the Administrative Assistant to help [REDACTED] with clerical work. Other options would be to hire a student employee or part-time clerical person to help perform these duties.
  - a. ONGOING – adaptations to personal needs and styles of project managers, integration with new systems, etc. is an evolving process
- 11. Director should arrange for internal celebrations to include staff and invited guests when a project ends.
  - a. NOT INITATED – budget does not exist for accomplishing this
- 12. As mentioned in the External Reviewer’s report, explore the use of contracted [REDACTED] to gain more staff resources without committing to full time employment.
  - a. NOT INITIATED – qualified resources not available within the fiscal and operational constraints of the varying need