



This final issue of the 2017-18 academic year is an update on our ongoing efforts to **improve processes and systems in the Dean's Office** to make it easier and more efficient for Dietrich School faculty and staff to work with us.

For the past few months, staff members in the Dean's office have been working to identify more efficient ways to process paperwork. These efforts already are showing a big payoff.

We've reduced the time it takes for us to approve sabbatical requests by nearly 90%. And we are reducing the number of letters that will be required by faculty and department chairs to process requests. Along the way, we are discovering more ways to improve our processes and turnaround time. Stay tuned: many of our updated processes will debut in Fall 2018. Under the leadership of Maureen Lazar, our Director of Workforce Effectiveness, we continue to map our processes to find ways to meet your needs in the most efficient way possible.

We are also going (mostly) paperless. Virtually all communication with departments and faculty has already been shifted to email. This summer we will take the next step, moving to electronic personnel records that will feed into the University's systems. The University's Computing Services and Systems Development (CSSD) staff and our Dietrich School IT team are developing e-security protocols to ensure the integrity and safety of our record-keeping processes, and we'll be providing training to all staff members whose work will be impacted by this change.

We want you to know what you can expect from the Dean's office in terms of response time, scope of support, and other important issues. So, all our staff teams are developing internal service agreements through a careful process of assessing your needs, requests and preferences. These will be valuable benchmarking resources so we're able to constantly improve our efforts to serve you. You'll hear more about these as they are finalized this semester.

To give our departments direct access to the most frequently requested real-time data about their undergraduate and graduate students, we've rolled out the first generation of a new resource: the Chair's Dashboard. We'll continue to improve this tool, making it more robust and comprehensive with each successive iteration. But this is a big step forward in providing departmental leaders with the information they need to plan more effectively and make decisions more strategically.

Our Sponsored Research Team, under the direction of Kathy Hixenbaugh, has responded to concerns about the need for closer connections with faculty and staff by beginning to offer

departmental "office hours" that will increase their visibility and availability to people involved in writing and submitting external grant and contract proposals. Our goal is to both streamline and personalize what can be a complex and involved process by bringing our experts right to your doorstep.

We also continue to listen to you. Earlier this term, our Executive Director for Staff Personnel and Senior Assistant Dean, Michele Montag, met with department chairs and program directors across the school, conducting her own version of the "listening tour" that several of our associate deans and I completed in the fall. Michele's outreach effort yielded important suggestions, comments, and requests about staffing support and operations. We are now exploring ways to best address some of the problem areas that she learned about in these important conversations.

We've instituted the practice of conducting both staff and faculty exit interviews to gather candid, critical feedback that will help us better support, retain, and recruit talented employees. While some factors are beyond our control as a school, many others—including providing additional professional development opportunities and creating a more friendly, flexible workplace environment—are within our ability to address.

We'll continue to check in with you in both formal and informal ways and I encourage you to do the same. The only way we can continue improve is if you tell us what you need. The best way to communicate with us is through the following senior administrative team members:

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Kay Brummond, Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs: kbrummon@pitt.edu

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Michele Montag, Executive Director for Staff Personnel and Senior Assistant Dean: michelemontag@pitt.edu

Best wishes for a successful remainder of the term and for a healthy, happy summer.