

Operational Review Final Report

New York Law School
Anthony W. Crowell, Dean and President

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Project Summary

NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

Background

On May 22, 2012, Anthony W. Crowell was appointed Dean and President of New York Law School. A primary focus for him was to conduct a thorough examination of the law school's operations – top to bottom and end to end – to ensure that the highest quality service was being delivered in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. On August 1, 2012, Dean Crowell announced the NYLS Operational Review.

Objective

The Operational Review focused on identifying areas across the school where it could operate more efficiently and cost-effectively and where it could improve how NYLS serves its customers – students, applicants, alumni, faculty, staff, employers, trustees and other NYLS community members. The effort would serve as a foundation for strategic planning and would have as its key objectives:

- enhancing functionality between departments,
- streamlining processes, and
- maximizing resources.

Outcome

361 Total Findings and Recommendations

94 Prioritized Recommendations

13 Key Projects

NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

Quantitative Findings

In the last decade, NYLS has become larger and more complex.

From 2000 through 2011:

- student enrollment increased approximately 39%¹
- the number of faculty (full-time and adjunct) has grown approximately 50%²
- the number of staff/administrators increased approximately 23%³
- approximately 14 new centers, degrees, certificates and special programs were created

In 2009-2010:

- the campus size doubled, adding more than 230k square feet and doubling the classroom capacity
- multiple complex technology systems were implemented
- classrooms (actual and virtual) became more sophisticated

1. As reported to the National Center for Education Statistics.

2. Refer to NYLS Fast Facts, Fall 2012 as compiled by the NYLS Office of Institutional Research.

3. Refer to NYLS Fast Facts, Fall 2012 as compiled by the NYLS Office of Institutional Research.

Qualitative Findings

As the school has grown and become more sophisticated, the policies, processes and technology have not always kept pace.

- Many business processes have been altered ad hoc or layered, resulting in inefficient or manual processes.
- New centers, programs, compliance requirements, and other functions often operate outside of the established processes and require significant time and resources for handling as exceptions.
- Certain IT systems are not fully integrated and can't easily share data creating gaps between departments or requiring duplication of effort.
- There is an absence of clear policies and procedures for certain key functions.

Key Principles from the Findings and Recommendations

The operational review resulted in more than 300 findings and recommendations, most of which centered around three key principles:

- *Efficiency: Automating and Integrating Business Processes* – there are too many manual processes and too much exception-handling.
- *Technology: Maximizing Information Systems* – many systems and tools are not fully utilized and systems are not well-integrated. There is no unified strategy for adopting a “best in breed” (implementing the best system available for a particular need) vs. an “interoperable” (implement systems that meet a particular need but also integrate well with existing tools and resources) approach.
- *Service: Improving Service Delivery* – current processes and policies often result in extra effort for customers and increased work for staff. There is a lack of continuity between key service areas.

Summary of Recommendations

The operational review resulted in 361 recommendations. Each recommendation was evaluated on a multi-dimensional basis including a determination of its value to the institution and a preliminary assessment of the effort or cost involved to implement.

This extensive effort resulted in the identification of 94 prioritized recommendations. The prioritized recommendations fall into distinct categories.

- 40% involve changing, eliminating or re-assigning a process. For example, integrating graduate and other non-JD programs into the established admissions process.
- 20% involve changing a system or converting a manual or spreadsheet process into a system. For example, automating the student status change process which requires multiple departments exchanging numerous spreadsheets.
- 16% involve using an unused or underutilized feature of an existing system. For example, enabling an unused function within existing academic tracking software to process certain scholarships that are currently handled manually.
- 24% involve considering a new system. For example, replacing the current room scheduling system to provide for mobile access and web-based calendaring.

Implementation Approach

Each of the 94 prioritized recommendations demands a varying degree of effort to implement. To provide the greatest likelihood for success, certain program management and organizing principles will be adopted.

First, the prioritized initiatives have been organized into distinct project groupings. This keeps related and dependent initiatives closely connected, and provides a more manageable reporting structure for tracking progress.

Second, employing rigorous project management and governance protocols will ensure that each project team is accountable for timely implementation.

And finally, the top-down support and continuous feedback channels that were established during the operational review will be maintained during implementation to ensure an open and transparent process.

Project	# of Initiatives	Relating to . .
1. Marketing, Events & Web	16	Marketing activities, web site improvements and the events management process
2. Faculty Support	12	Faculty and adjunct support including staff training and collaboration
3. Student Services and Systems	10	Registration, managing student status and use of the Banner system
4. Service Management	7	Service requests for classroom technology, maintenance, events and IT
5. Procurement	7	Requisitioning and purchasing processes and policies
6. Academic Services	6	Exam procedures, academic computing/blackboard, virtual classroom, course evaluations
7. Financial Processes	6	Budgeting and accounting processes and management reporting
8. Human Resources Processes	5	Payroll, processing new and separating employees
9. Graduate Program Processes	5	Standardizing the administration of the non-J.D. programs
10. Alumni Processes	2	Alumni relations and tracking
11. Business Office Processes	2	Bookstore operations and textbook management
12. Admissions	1	Managing and tracking recruitment activity
13. Miscellaneous	11	A variety of discrete, actionable improvements

Project Details

The Operational Review Process

The Operational Review was modeled after the approach to operational reform used by Dean Crowell and Executive Vice President Carole Post during their time with the Bloomberg Administration. The method relies on internal resources who know the operation well, and are challenged to examine it with a fresh, critical eye, continuously seek input and validation, and identify actionable recommendations that can make measurable improvements.

The teams reviewed each functional area to document its mission, process, strengths and opportunities for improvement. Thereafter, they conducted interviews and in-depth review sessions with many stakeholders to validate findings and identify untapped opportunities. Throughout the process, the teams refined their findings and recommendations and at several checkpoints, emerging themes were presented to leadership and staff for review.

Governance

The review was carried out by small teams of NYLS staff who applied their skills and expertise while carrying out their regular jobs and day-to-day responsibilities.

A total of 22 staff members formed 5 teams to review 20 functional areas across the institution over the course of 4 ½ months.

The staff members came from nearly every functional area of the law school and ranged in years of service to the institution from 30 years to 3 weeks. This highly-diverse cross-section of staff enabled a unique view and fresh perspective for each functional area being evaluated.

There also were a dozen subject matter experts – senior staff members with a particular specialty – who provided expertise and insight on a particular topic.

In addition, a cross section of stakeholders, including faculty, students, board members and alumni participated in individual and group interviews and advisory panels. Throughout, all faculty and staff were invited to contribute ideas, thoughts and suggestions to the process.

Services and Operations Reviewed

Team 1: Core Customer Functions

- Admissions & Financial Aid
- Registrar
- Student Services
- Academic Affairs
- Career Planning

Team 2: Administrative Functions

- Financial Planning & Management
- Business Operations
- Human Resources
- Building Operations
- Security & Safety

Team 3: Academic Support Functions

- Library Services
- Centers & Institutes
- Academic Publishing
- Graduate & Other Programs
- Faculty Support

Team 4: External-Facing Functions

- Events Management
- Marketing & Communications
- Development & Alumni Relations

Team 5: Foundational Support

- Information Technology

Developing the Findings and Recommendations

Each team developed a series of high level process work flows for the areas of review. Each work flow was evaluated to determine which functions provided the greatest opportunity for improvement. These functions received a “deep dive” evaluation – an intense and more exhaustive review - resulting in a detailed set of findings and recommendations.

In addition, team 3 and team 5 each conducted a comprehensive effort to catalog their respective review areas .

Team 3 developed a detailed “identity map” of every center, institute and program at the law school. This included an overview of the mission and purpose, administrative staffing, office location and resources, publications, events, student participation and other identifying characteristics.

Team 5 performed a similar survey to catalog each and every information technology initiative underway at the school and to record its current status, upcoming milestones and progress toward completion.

Prioritizing the Recommendations

When the teams concluded their fact-finding there were more than 300 recommendations. Distilling and prioritizing the recommendations was done through an extensive series of work sessions.

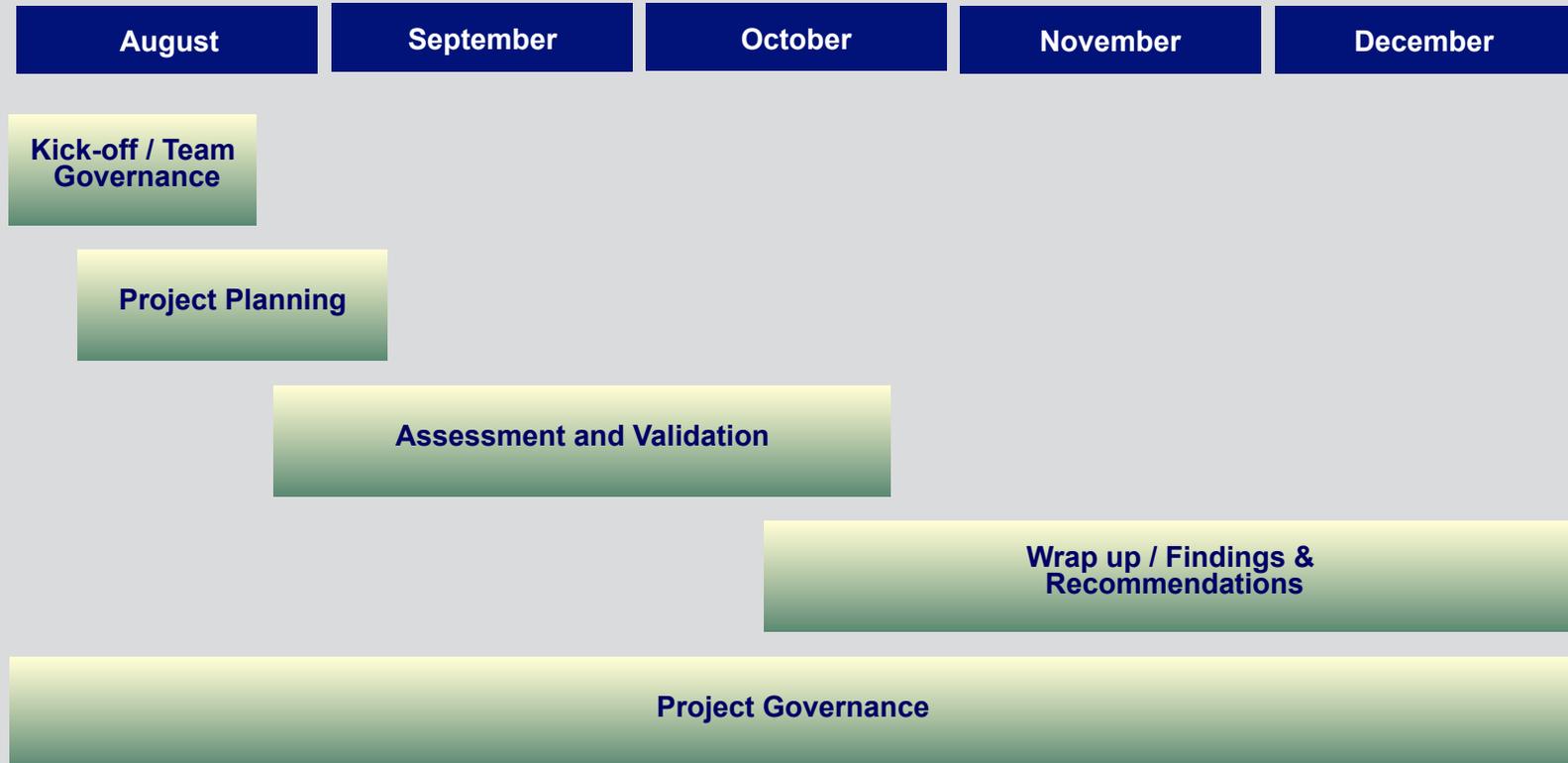
Each team conducted a multi-dimensional evaluation of their work, including a qualitative assessment of the “level of effort” (LOE) and the “return on investment” (ROI) for every recommendation. Thereafter, each team assigned a weighted priority to each recommendation, based on its importance to the institution and the impact it would make on improving operations.

In some cases, the recommendations would likely yield operational improvements or reduce operating costs, however the implementation would demand substantial resources to tackle a highly complex change. In other cases, small changes could be implemented easily. Ultimately, the teams recommended 94 initiatives that were established as priorities. The balance of the recommendations will be regularly evaluated for implementation.

Project Participation and Transparency

- The five teams consisted of 22 staff members who each committed approximately one-half of their time for 4 ½ months (August – December 2012)
- More than 100 stakeholders were interviewed, individually or in groups
- Interim findings and recommendations were reviewed with Advisory Committees
 - Student Advisory Committee – 10/17/12
 - Alumni Advisory Committee – 11/15/12
 - Faculty Advisory Committee - 12/10/12
- Status and preliminary findings were presented to various leadership and other staff, as well as to the Board of Trustees
- Monthly status e-mails were sent to all NYLS staff and faculty to keep them apprised of the progress of the project and what to expect coming up

Project Schedule



Recommendations Summary

Operational Review Summary

5	Operational Review Teams
22	Staff Members
20	Functional Areas Reviewed
130	Operational Functions Evaluated
75	Operational Functions Reviewed via a more in-depth evaluation
361	Findings and Recommendations
94	Prioritized Recommendations

Recommendation Summary

Efficiency: Automating and Integrating Business Processes

- *Streamline and automate key business processes* - Many processes are inefficient, and involve too many manual steps. This is because processes have evolved over time and been altered ad hoc to meet each new requirement. For example, course scheduling involves maintaining information in an electronic system, a spreadsheet and a manual form.
- *Reduce or eliminate exception handling* – For many processes, significant time is allocated to handling exceptions. When new centers, programs, certification compliance or other initiatives are added, these are often treated as exceptions to existing processes and never fully integrated resulting in duplication of effort and often, manual steps. For example, admissions and registration for graduate students is often handled manually, rather than by common, standardized processes.

Service: Improving Service Delivery

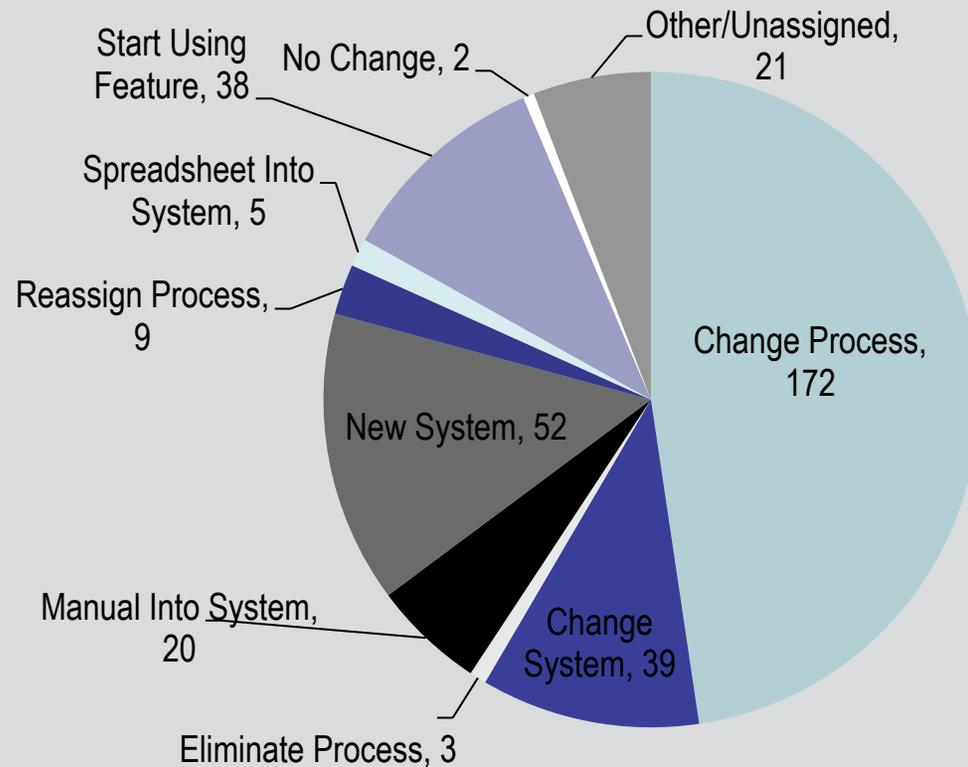
- *Scale administrative functions* - Ensure that administrative are appropriately scaled to meet demand. Ad hoc processes often lack the appropriate mechanisms or features to deliver scalability and preserve service quality. In addition, improving efficiency will enable more effective use of current staff and reduce the risk that processes lack appropriate controls.

Recommendation Summary

Technology: Maximizing Information Systems

- *Optimize use of existing IT tools and resources* – Many existing electronic systems are not fully leveraged in that there is functionality that is not used or under-used and could be used with minimal technical development.
- *Improve system integration* - A number of recommendations involve improving the integration between systems, usually by developing an automated interface so that one system can share data with another.
- *Establish an IT solutions strategy* - There should be a single approach adopted for implementing IT solutions between the “best in breed” method (supporting a business need with a stand-alone system which is selected and/or customized to meet the needs of a specific group of users) and the “integrated” method (supporting a business need using the features of an existing system, or with a system from an existing vendor, designed to integrate with other systems already in use to provide a consistent experience across multiple user groups, but not necessarily customized for any particular user).

Distribution of All Recommendations by Type



- “Change Process” – Change a business process or procedure
- “Reassign Process” – Process or procedure could be performed by different personnel/unit/division
- “Eliminate Process” – Process or procedure should be discontinued
- “Change System” – Change an existing computer system or program
- “New System” – Implement a new computer system or program
- “Start Using Feature” – Enable a system feature which is not being used currently
- “Manual Into System” – Convert a manual activity into an electronic process
- “Spreadsheet Into System” – Convert a spreadsheet-based activity into a computer system function

Implementing the Recommendations

Improving processes and systems is a continuous effort that requires project management protocols to manage and track implementation.

Some of the initiatives are best implemented as unique, discreet efforts, while others are more effectively implemented in bundles. Certain initiatives are dependent on other initiatives being completed.

An action plan will be developed for each of the prioritized recommendations to track and monitor implementation. Many of these are underway already. The Operational Review informed and fed into the NYLS strategic planning process. Likewise, implementation of these recommendations will run in parallel with efforts associated with implementing the strategic plan initiatives.