

The TEAM Initiative: Tufts Effectiveness in Administrative Management

August 2014

Project Update: Tufts Support Services (TSS)

Updated: August 29, 2014

Tufts Support Services (TSS): Improving Administrative Services at the University

Tufts Support Services (TSS) will be a new organization within Tufts University that will support an improved model for delivering services to Tufts faculty, staff and student-employees. Under the TSS model, Tufts will consolidate resources and provide a simple, service-oriented approach to conducting many of the administrative human resources (HR) and finance tasks currently carried out by many different groups within the university.

TSS will launch in mid-December 2014 and have a physical presence on the Boston, Grafton and Medford/Somerville campuses. Individuals may contact TSS via the TSS website, email, phone, fax, US postal service or walk-in to the physical location, should they desire in-person assistance.

The development and launch of TSS is one of many projects within the Tufts Effectiveness in Administrative Management (TEAM) Program, a university-wide initiative designed to ensure that our administration supports Tufts' core academic mission while also serving as a responsible steward of the resources entrusted to us. Please visit the [TEAM website](#) for more information about this program.

TSS Is One Important Way Tufts Will Ensure Operational Excellence and Financial Stability

Higher education is confronting significant challenges. Today, colleges and universities face mounting pressures to lower tuition, adhere to increased compliance requirements and compensate for diminished state and Federal research funds. At Tufts, we have decided the best way to address these challenges and ensure the long-term stability of our university is to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. TSS is part of the TEAM Program focused on that goal.

Lowering our operating costs will help us direct as many resources as possible towards teaching, research and service programs. One important way Tufts can reduce operating costs is by reducing duplicative work. Last year, we identified many duplicative efforts being performed across the university that can be consolidated. We know Tufts cannot excel at achieving its mission without the contributions of our administrative employees. However, it is important that we make every effort to provide administrative services in such a way that the work gets done more cost-effectively without diminishing quality. By bringing routine work that is currently performed across schools and divisions into a specialized unit, such as TSS, the university can provide consistently high-quality, improve accuracy, minimize the duplication of effort and reduce costs. As a result, Tufts' faculty and staff will be able to focus more time and resources on other work that supports their core missions.

TSS Will Provide Support for Many Human Resources and Finance Administrative Services

DID YOU KNOW?



When investigating how and where work was performed at Tufts last year, we discovered that HR receives almost 4,000 inquiries a month, mostly about general questions that would be managed by a centralized group of employees, well versed in HR policy and procedures.

Providing this service within TSS will allow Tufts community members to get important questions answered faster, and allow HR staff to focus their time on solving more complex matters.

TSS will answer questions about and provide direct support for many human resources (HR) and finance-related administrative services to Tufts faculty, staff, student-employees and prospective employees.

TSS will provide the Tufts community with a single point of contact for many accounting, travel, expense, benefits, leave, recruitment and procurement administrative services. Administrative services that will be provided by TSS when it launches include but are not limited to:

- Processing employee work and personal data changes
- Providing payroll-related reporting, auditing and compliance
- Receiving and processing qualified status changes
- Processing time and attendance data
- Providing employee support for benefits inquiries
- Responding to general inquiries regarding leaves, including the referral of complex inquiries and requests to central HR
- Updating and tracking leave balances
- Responding to prospective employee status inquiries
- Addressing questions related to procurement policies
- Conducting data entry and compliance work related to new vendor set-up
- Processing purchase orders under certain thresholds
- Supporting creation and processing of interdepartmental requisitions (IDRs)
- Answering questions about the expense process and policy
- Providing travel booking assistance
- Helping prepare travel and expense reimbursement requests

Today, at Tufts, many of these services are provided by employees across the schools and divisions whose primary responsibilities are very different and who carry out these tasks infrequently. Because they don't provide these services often, employees may need significant time to re-familiarize themselves with related university policies and procedures. This reduces the time they are able to spend on their primary job responsibilities. TSS anticipates that the university community will receive consistently faster, high-quality service by utilizing TSS for such services.

For example, a faculty member may ask a departmental administrative assistant to book travel for an academic conference. Currently, the administrative assistant would likely need to research policy, procedure, travel expense compliance requirements, and preferred vendors and might later be asked to coordinate much of the expense reimbursement process.

After TSS has launched, the faculty member would be able to contact TSS. A TSS employee well versed in university travel and expense policy would be able to assist in booking travel for the faculty member,

provide guidance on expense policy and the expense reimbursement process, and following the travel, help prepare and submit expense forms for reimbursement.

The Tufts community will be able to access TSS support via live client service, as well as through a self-service web portal. Client service will be provided by phone, email, fax, US postal service and in-person support at TSS centers on the Boston, Grafton and Medford/Somerville campuses.

While we have not finalized all TSS operational policies, we expect that TSS will be open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and will provide self-service resources to answer many basic questions and facilitate service requests 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

TSS will be an operating division of the Office of the Executive Vice President and will be led by Senior Director of TSS Dick Doolin. Dick has worked at Tufts for more than 32 years in a number of finance positions, most recently as the director of financial services supporting all university financial activities, including disbursements, post award research administration, financial systems and reporting. His experience at the university covers a broad range of activities that will be supported by TSS.

Based on best practices in higher education, TSS will utilize a cloud-based technology, Salesforce.com, to efficiently track and report on support requests. This will allow Tufts community members to better monitor the status of their support requests and will promote high-quality service within TSS. This technology will also be used to support the accessibility of all self-service resources.

How TSS Will Be Staffed

In addition to the senior director of TSS, we anticipate that TSS will require a total of 40 full-time and seven temporary positions to operate at the time of launch in mid-December. All TSS positions will be posted on the [Work@Tufts](#) website and will be open to internal applicants. Hiring for TSS positions will be governed by existing Tufts HR employment policies and procedures.

The primary goal in staffing TSS will be to retain as many knowledgeable and qualified Tufts employees as possible to ensure that TSS employees are highly skilled and well versed in university culture, policies and procedures.

TSS will utilize some temporary positions during its initial launch to ensure there is enough coverage to meet client demands and expectations. We anticipate that there will be an initial, critical need during the launch phase that is expected to level off over six months as TSS establishes itself as part of “doing business” at Tufts. The HR business partner (HRBP) and the TSS senior director will review each temporary position before its contract end date to determine if the position should be eliminated, extended or transitioned to another role. Future staffing levels will be determined based on volume of work and need for additional services.

As always, internal employees are eligible and encouraged to apply for positions within TSS or across Tufts University. Tufts employees can also apply for temporary roles, understanding that there are different employment terms.

The effect of the TSS launch on existing Tufts employees will vary by function, position and location. Tufts school, division and department leaders will work closely with the appropriate HRBPs for their areas to determine how best to manage each situation. Leaders will determine on a case-by-case basis whether the time previously spent on TSS tasks should be reallocated to other activities or whether positions should be reduced or eliminated.

A position is defined as reduced if the hours an employee is expected to work have decreased. Positions will be reduced when there are no other responsibilities that can be reallocated to the position to justify the same number of hours.

A position will be eliminated if it has been deemed no longer critical to the operation of the university. Positions may be eliminated if a majority or all of the responsibilities previously performed are now performed by TSS. Tufts intends to minimize involuntary job loss wherever possible through managed attrition (the process of not filling voluntarily vacated positions that are no longer needed), re-training personnel and realigning responsibilities.

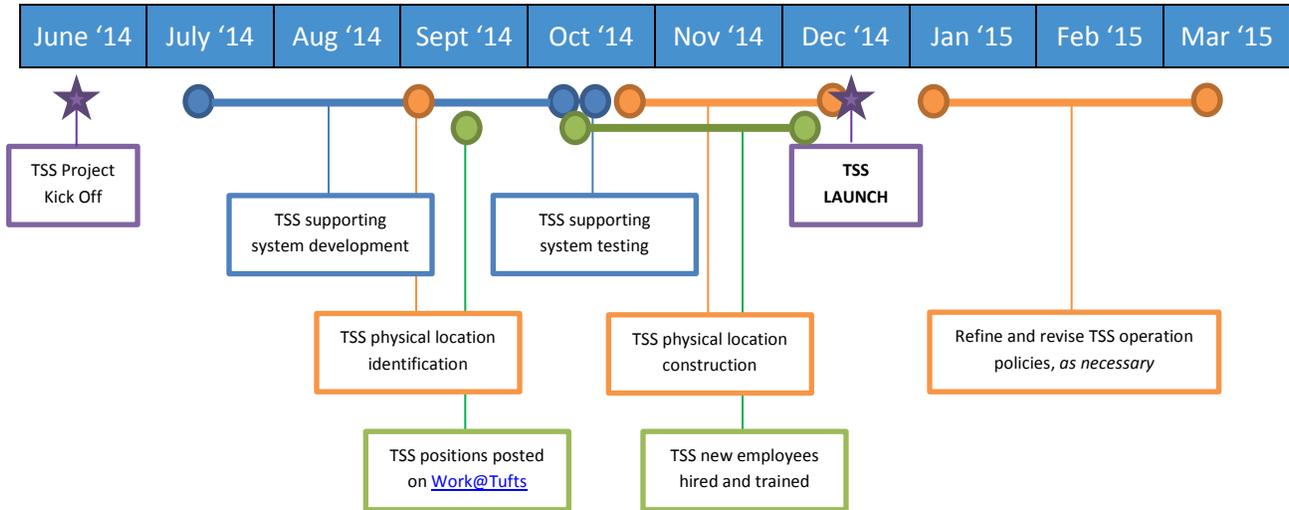
We are committed to making every effort to notify affected employees as soon as information is available. However, because we are using a case-by-case approach and taking the time to make thoughtful decisions, we do not have a definitive timeline for when this information will be available. We encourage all employees concerned about position reduction or position elimination to contact their supervisor or their HRBP to discuss opportunities with TSS.

TSS Launch Timeline & Key Milestones

TSS will launch in mid-December 2014 and will provide HR and finance-related services. TSS will launch all services at once and will not use a phased approach. This date was selected because there are typically fewer HR and financial transactions and support requests between mid-December and mid-January, allowing time to fine-tune operations as needed before the start of the spring semester.

A detailed timeline of the TSS implementation process and launch is included in the following table:

TSS Launch Timeline and Key Milestones Table



Have Additional Questions?

The following resources are available should you have questions about TSS or the TEAM Program:

- **TEAM Program website:** <http://evp.tufts.edu/administrative-initiatives/team>
- **Share your questions and/or feedback with the TEAM Program:** <http://evp.tufts.edu/administrative-initiatives/team/community-input>
- **Your HR business partner will also be available to work with you. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact interim Vice President of HR Martha Pokras at martha.pokras@tufts.edu**