Institutional Planning & Effectiveness

September 6, 2021

<u>Office of Faculty Research Support Self-Study Interviews Report</u>

Introduction

Aimed at exploring potential improvements for the Office of Faculty Research Support, Tess Powers, the Director of Faculty Research Support collaborated with the Office of Institutional Planning & Effectiveness to interview Colorado College's faculty and staff that work directly or indirectly with Faculty Research Support in various stages of the faculty grant process. The results from these interviews found consistent themes across all departments regarding positive and constructive feedback. Additionally, there are many departments specific feedback aimed at their roles in the faculty grant process and the positives and limitations of the position of Director of Faculty Research support.

Participants

The participant list was curated by the Office of Faculty Research Support and reached out by the Office of Institutional Planning & Effectiveness. Of the 14 people curated by Faculty Research Support, 12 faculty and staff members were able to participate in this self-assessment. The departments represented in these interviews include Corporate and Foundation Relations (CFR), Finance, Office of the Vice Provost, Academic Programs, Payroll and Human Resources, Communications, Office of Institutional Planning & Effectiveness, Writing Center, and Student Opportunities.

Method

Each participant met with a third-party interviewer either in-person or over zoom for approximately 15-20 minutes and answered 5 questions written by the Office of Faculty Research Support regarding positive and constructive feedback about the Director position. The Questions include:

1. In what capacity have you worked with the position of the Director of Faculty Research Support?
2. In what ways has your work/interaction with this position been positive?
3. In what ways could this position better support your work?
4. In what ways could this position better support the mission of Colorado College?
5. What else would be helpful for Tess or the College to know or be thinking about as they review the work of this office and consider future improvements?

The interviewees' statement was not written verbatim, but instead the interviewer wrote down general themes and ideas posited by the participants. Notes were then coded on commonalities within and between departments (See figure 1 and 2). Additionally, a list of function specific function feedback was consolidated into a single table (See Table 1).

Results

Positive Feedback

The main findings from the interviews found that all participants classified working with the Director of Faculty Research Support as entirely or almost entirely a positive experience. Other constant themes that participants expressed in regard to Tess Powers also classified her as precise, or the Director's ability to clearly and concisely communicate and ask questions and set deadline, proactive, or the Director's ability to tackle projects in an efficient and timely manner, and knowledgeable, or the Director's knowledge of grants, faculty, and Colorado College's grant process.
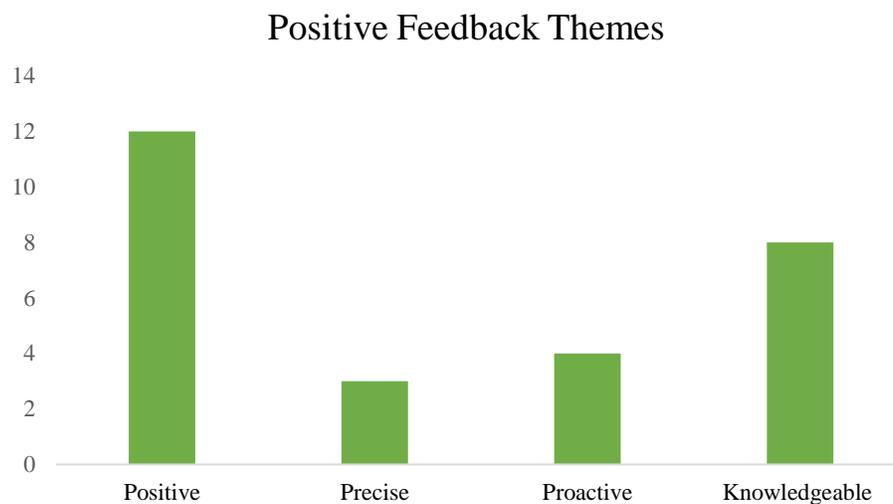
Positive Feedback Themes

Figure 1: Frequency of positive feedback themes across all interviews.

The ultimate takeaways from the positive feedback portion of the interview appeared that everyone enjoyed working with Tess Powers and she has an incredible amount of experience in her field and is an extremely professional individual. Participants also loved her ideas and the work she has done to further streamline the grant process, from grant writing to process payments. Many also cited Powers' workshops as great resource for faculty and staff when applying for grants and her accessibility and hands on approach to coaching people through the grant process a positive component to their work.

Constructive Feedback

The major themes of the constructive feedback predominantly centralized around problems with communication with the grant process and emphasize the importance of providing Tess Powers with additional staff or resources. The common themes participants conveyed in

their interviews was the need for more communication on projects and grant applications, either through automation of forms, some tracking mechanism, such as an excel sheet people can use to send updates about a grant application's status, additional support, or people who explicitly said that the office needed more resources, specifically mentioning more staff or an administrative assistant, workload of the office, which many people thought that Tess Powers had too many responsibilities for a single person to take on, Automation, or the idea to automate the grant process to further streamline communication, integration, or melding CFR or similar offices with Office of Faculty Research Support, and promote faculty's work, or highlight the work faculty have been doing, specifically with students, emphasize Faculty of color and faculty from marginalized demographics, and any nationally relevant grants that a faculty member received.
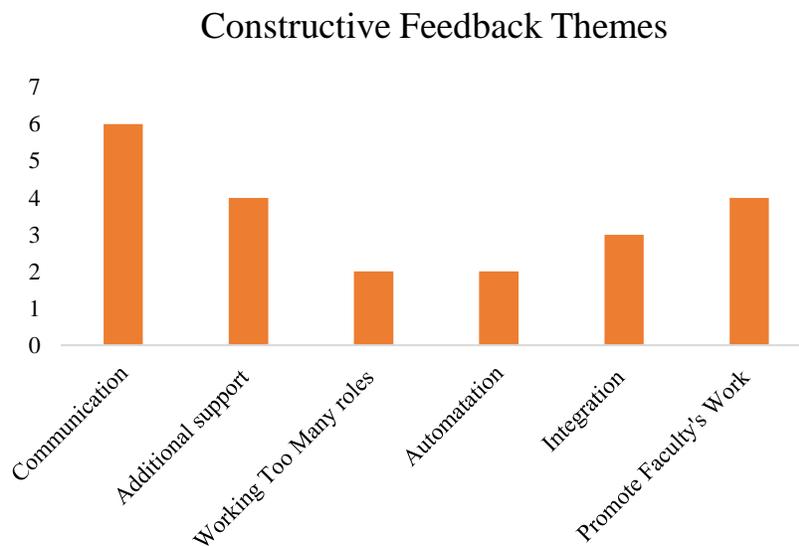
Constructive Feedback Themes

Figure 2: Frequency of constructive feedback themes across all interviews.

The overall sentiment expressed by many individuals convey similar issues with communication and Tess's lack of staff assistance. While many stated communications a problem with their work, it seemed by most participants that Faculty Research Support was far from the main culprit in this lack of communication about projects, but a general issue prevalent across all offices and departments. In fact, many also stated that Tess Powers was an exemption in this communication problem, citing her proactive and precise professional skills, or some found that she was not as bad as the many other faculty and staff. For additional support, many found that the Director of Faculty Research Support has immense experience in grants and is extremely valuable to the college, her workload can result in other low priority issues to often take a back seat or bigger picture issue could be overlooked. A major caveat to people's comments on potential improvements was their limited interaction with Tess Powers' office, so their information on her daily activities was restricted by their collaborations with her office.

<u>Feedback By Department</u>

      Due to each department's feedback being partially related to their specialized function in the grant process at Colorado College, this section breaks down feedback by department or office. While much of the feedback was universal, their applications varied by office and role in the grant process (see table 1).

Table 1: The departmental break down of office-specific feedback related to the position of Director of Faculty Research Support and the office's function in its totality.

Department	Feedback
Corporate and Foundation Relations	Integrate offices together or establish a division to work more closely together. Other colleges do have CFR and Faculty Research Support, which the office believes would make the grant process more efficient overall.
Finance	Have an additional staff member on the finance to go through the faculty grants' reconciliation to screen for any discrepancy or any conflicts with a grant's compliancy policy in terms of allowable expenses. The office also suggested a departmental checklist to ensure that each person has performed every necessary in the grant process from start to finish.
Office of the Vice Provost	Creating a regular report taking a further delve into grants and existing funds. This would include which faculty or departments are being helped and who is not, what are funds spent on, and what is the grant composition of the existing funds? The office also expressed interest in a grant advising hub to centralize grant processing and advising to a single space.
Academic Programs	Predominantly emphasized the necessity of providing the Office of Faculty Research Support with additional resource to operate more effectively.
Payroll/Human Resources	Requests more time to process payments for faculty grants, suggesting at least two weeks in advance. Additionally, as theses offices are at the very of process, they find themselves to be out of the loop of grant applications' statuses and thus recommended a tracking

	mechanism to allow them to follow the progress of larger grant projects to anticipate when they will need to process a payment.
Communications	Wanted to emphasize the availability of communications' resources to help convery information on grant opportunities and highlight faculty and student research and grants.
Institutional Planning & Effectiveness	Emphasized the college's need to further develop our pre-award planning and suggested a departmental checklist so people can keep track of their roles in the grant process. Additionally, the office suggested historical research grant funding at Colorado College and if an increase in grant funding over the years requires additional support to manage those funds and applications.
Writing Center	Recommended a partnership with the Crown Center to provide grant funds for research on new pedagogical approaches for faculty to apply to their teaching methodologies.
Student Opportunities	Integrate the Colorado Springs community in faculty research and encourage more faculty members to collaborate with local non-profit organizations. Additionally, keep pushing grants into non-STEM fields to assists the humanities and the arts with their own research.

Conclusion

The Faculty Research Support self-study demonstrated great insights into the overwhelming positives of the office and Tess Powers within their cohort, but also posited several considerations for improvement. The main feedback conveyed consistently impressed how spectacular the office has been a resource for their offices and faculty, but also the communications issues that permeates all facets of Colorado College's offices and departments. Ultimately, this self-study should provide a substantial blueprint for how the office can further streamline its process and potentially explore ideas for restructuring their office to integrate with other offices to enrich their collaborative efforts.