TRANSFORMING RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

"One key to success is to get outside expert help. I am won over by the value of knowledgeable consultants. We couldn't run 7 to 10 working groups simultaneously with our own existing staff and expect them to perform their full-time jobs, as well. The Huron people kept those groups running for us, ensured follow-through and helped us achieve results much more quickly than we would have been able to do ourselves."

MARCIA L. SMITH, ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH

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THE OPPORTUNITY

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is one of the nation's premier research universities. Its annual research funding more than doubled over a 10-year period and annual awards surpassed $1 billion during the 2009-10 fiscal year. This steep increase in research activity placed tremendous pressure on the research administration infrastructure, which led to backlogs, as well as difficulty maintaining desired levels of customer service.

"Prior to the development of UCLA's Research Administration Process Improvement and Deployment (RAPID) initiative, I received numerous complaints from faculty and deans about research administration," said Scott Waugh, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost. "The improvement that resulted from this transformative approach has been significant and demonstrable."

UCLA leadership knew that the university needed firstrate administrative support if it was to stay competitive for research funding and personnel. UCLA research faculty, however, had serious complaints. They were experiencing lengthy delays in processing Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications, backlogs in invoicing and financial reporting, lack of technology tools to support research administration and ineffective communication between central and departmental administrators.

"When I arrived, nearly everything was broken. People weren't even talking to one another," said Marcia L. Smith, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research.

As a result, UCLA turned to Huron Education to help transform the university's research administration infrastructure and achieve sustainable operational excellence.

Huron worked with UCLA to develop a plan for a comprehensive performance improvement initiative to be delivered over several years. It called for forming multiple working groups to tackle the highest priority research administration challenges and involved a variety of areas such as pre- and post-award, human subjects, and information technology.

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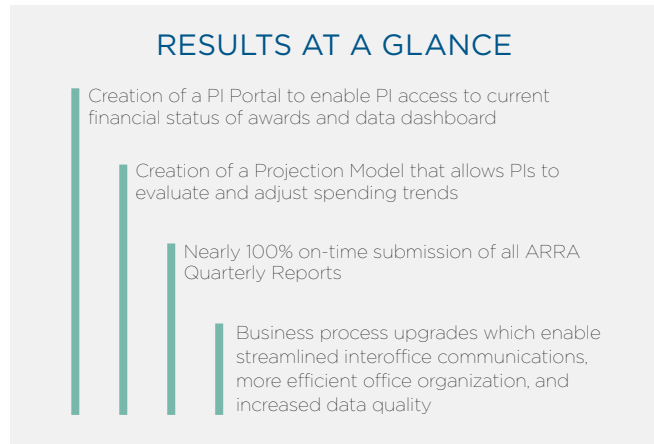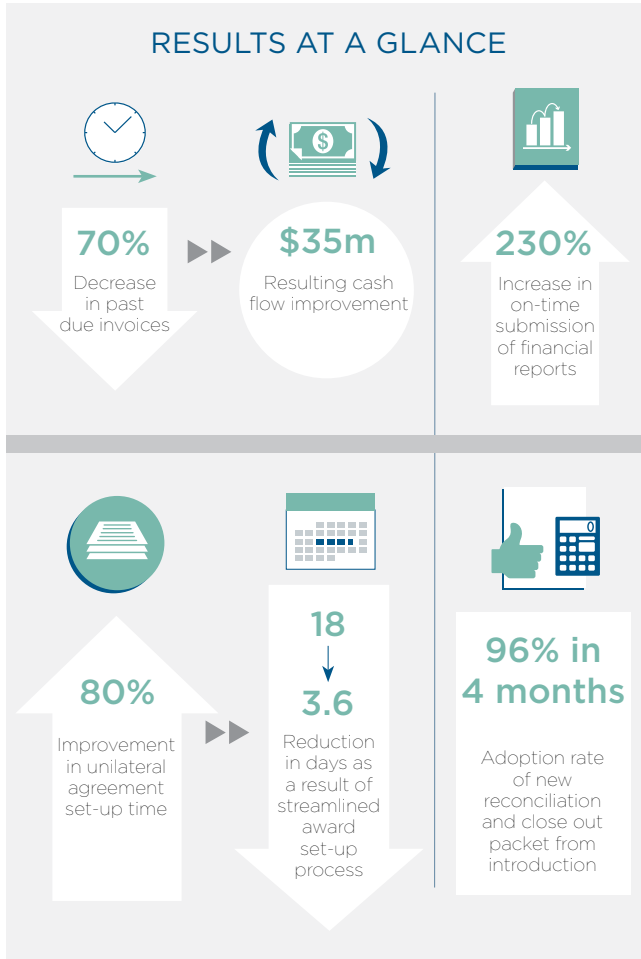
HURON

that many thought would be impossible," said Andrew F. Leuchter, Chair of the UCLA Academic Senate, and Chair of the RAPID Faculty Advisory Committee. "I and other faculty members at UCLA have been impressed by the ability of the RAPID team to quickly implement practical changes and find our participation in this initiative to be a productive use of time."

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

70%
Decrease in past due invoices

$35m
Resulting cash flow improvement

230%
Increase in on-time submission of financial reports

80%
Improvement in unilateral agreement set-up time

18 ↓ **3.6**
Reduction in days as a result of streamlined award set-up process

96% in 4 months
Adoption rate of new reconciliation and close out packet from introduction

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>
> **ANDREW F. LEUCHTER**, CHAIR, UCLA ACADEMIC SENATE CHAIR, RAPID FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

THE APPROACH

Working collaboratively with UCLA leadership and other key research administration constituents, Huron tailored its fivephase Research Administration Transformation methodology to meet UCLA's specific needs. This collaborative approach allowed Huron to leverage its deep research administration expertise while accommodating and respecting the unique values and culture of UCLA.

Huron began its work at UCLA with three strategic goals: (1) improve service to faculty, (2) enhance financial performance and (3) mitigate compliance risk. As part of the assessment, a project Steering Committee and Faculty Advisory Committee were established to guide the projects that were most vital to the research faculty.

The plan first called for a far-reaching, three-month organizational assessment, including a functional review of the nine central offices with research administration responsibilities, interviews with about 280 UCLA employees, a review of training programs, an assessment of the organizational structure, and an analysis of more than 25 key business processes.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Creation of a PI Portal to enable PI access to current financial status of awards and data dashboard

Creation of a Projection Model that allows PIs to evaluate and adjust spending trends

Nearly 100% on-time submission of all ARRA Quarterly Reports

Business process upgrades which enable streamlined interoffice communications, more efficient office organization, and increased data quality

Based on the results of the organizational assessment, Huron developed a report that provided detailed recommendations, and included comprehensive solutions to achieve the university's strategic goals. Huron worked

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| PHASE 1: Visioning & Planning | PHASE 2: Discovery & Design | PHASE 3: Solution & Development | PHASE 4: Execution & Implementation | PHASE 5: Operations & Support |

with UCLA leadership to prioritize the solutions, create business cases and develop project timelines for implementation. Since the Huron assessment, more than 25 workgroups have been formed to develop and implement these solutions in order to keep pace with the ever-changing research environment.
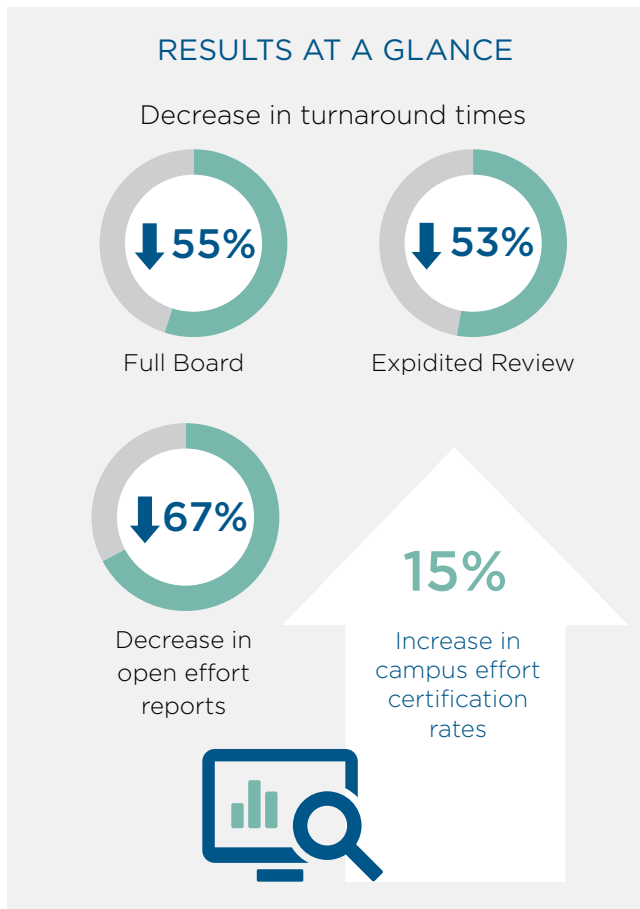
> "Working with Huron we felt like they had as much invested in improving our processes as we did."
>
> **PATTI MANHEIM**, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF CONTRACT AND GRANTS ADMINISTRATION

"Huron provided practical recommendations and was a great implementation partner, working side-by-side with UCLA staff," said Smith. "Solutions were developed collaboratively, which helped achieve buy-in, and we were able to achieve quick and measureable results. Celebrating these allowed us to gain momentum and credibility."

UCLA leadership knew that the university would need to commit resources—both internal and external—to achieve their implementation goals. They also knew that they would need to gain campus buy-in and participation in order to create transformative, sustainable change in the research administration community. To address these issues, UCLA launched the Research Administration Process Improvement and Deployment (RAPID) initiative, in which a variety of work groups were created with broad participation from central and campus administrators, fund managers, systems analysts and compliance staff.

"UCLA's research transformation project engaged department administrators in a productive and meaningful way," said Raellen Man, Director of Research Administration in the Department of Medicine, and Vice Chair of the Research Administrators Campus Committee. "The project enabled both sides to come to the table to face one another and express themselves. That broke down a lot of barriers that had been built up over the years, and formed a common ground where one did not exist before."

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Decrease in turnaround times

↓55%
Full Board

↓53%
Expidited Review

↓67%
Decrease in open effort reports

15%
Increase in campus effort certification rates

"Huron did not just come in and make recommendations. They sat on every working group, had a plan for how it should proceed, and a definition of what success would look like," said Terry Novorr, Chief Administrative Officer of the Brain Research Institute, and Chair of Research Administrators Campus Committee.

"Working with Huron we felt like they had as much invested in improving our processes as we did," said Patti Manheim, Director of the Office of Contracts and Grants Administration.

As each initiative is completed, Huron is providing ongoing guidance as needed to ensure each of the solutions remains viable in the long term. Huron is also working with UCLA to develop performance metrics that track the success of implemented solutions and identify opportunities for further improvements. Given Huron's knowledge of UCLA's operations and organizational structure, as well as the strong relationship Huron and UCLA have built over time, Huron is able to facilitate meaningful cross-departmental discussions to inform additional recommendations and guide outcomes in the desired direction.

"Huron's high-caliber professionals and in-depth knowledge of our business helped propel our process improvement and technology solutions deployment," said Jackson Jeng, Director of the Office of Research Information Systems.

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