

# Can Higher Ed Work from Home? UTSA's Path to Large-Scale Telecommuting

**TASSCUBO**

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# Agenda

- UTSA at a Glance
- The Obstacle
- The Solution
- Timeline
- Steps Involved
- Keys to Success
- Challenges
- Benefits
- Lessons Learned

## Financial Affairs

99 Total Staff  
49 Telecommuters



**Sheri Hardison**  
Associate Vice President

## Budget & Financial Planning

9 Total Staff  
9 Telecommuters



**Tammy Anthony**  
Assistant Vice President



# UTSA<sup>®</sup>

## The University of Texas at San Antonio<sup>™</sup>

# UTSA<sup>®</sup> at a Glance

- Academic institution within The University of Texas System
- Emerging Research University
- Four campuses
- 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary in 2019
- \$624 million operating budget for FY2020
- 32,594 total students
- 4,205 graduate students
- 45% First Generation students
- 42% Pell eligible
- 159 Degrees offered
- 1,425 Faculty
- Staff Classified and A&P: 2,634 (excludes students)



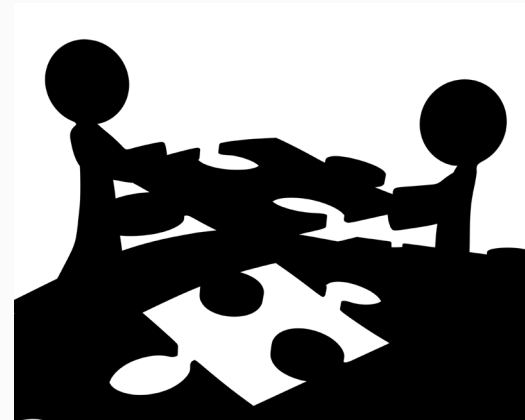
# The Obstacle

- New UTSA Collaboration Center
  - High-profile strategic priority
- Space needed
  - Quickly
  - Large area
- No additional permanent budget

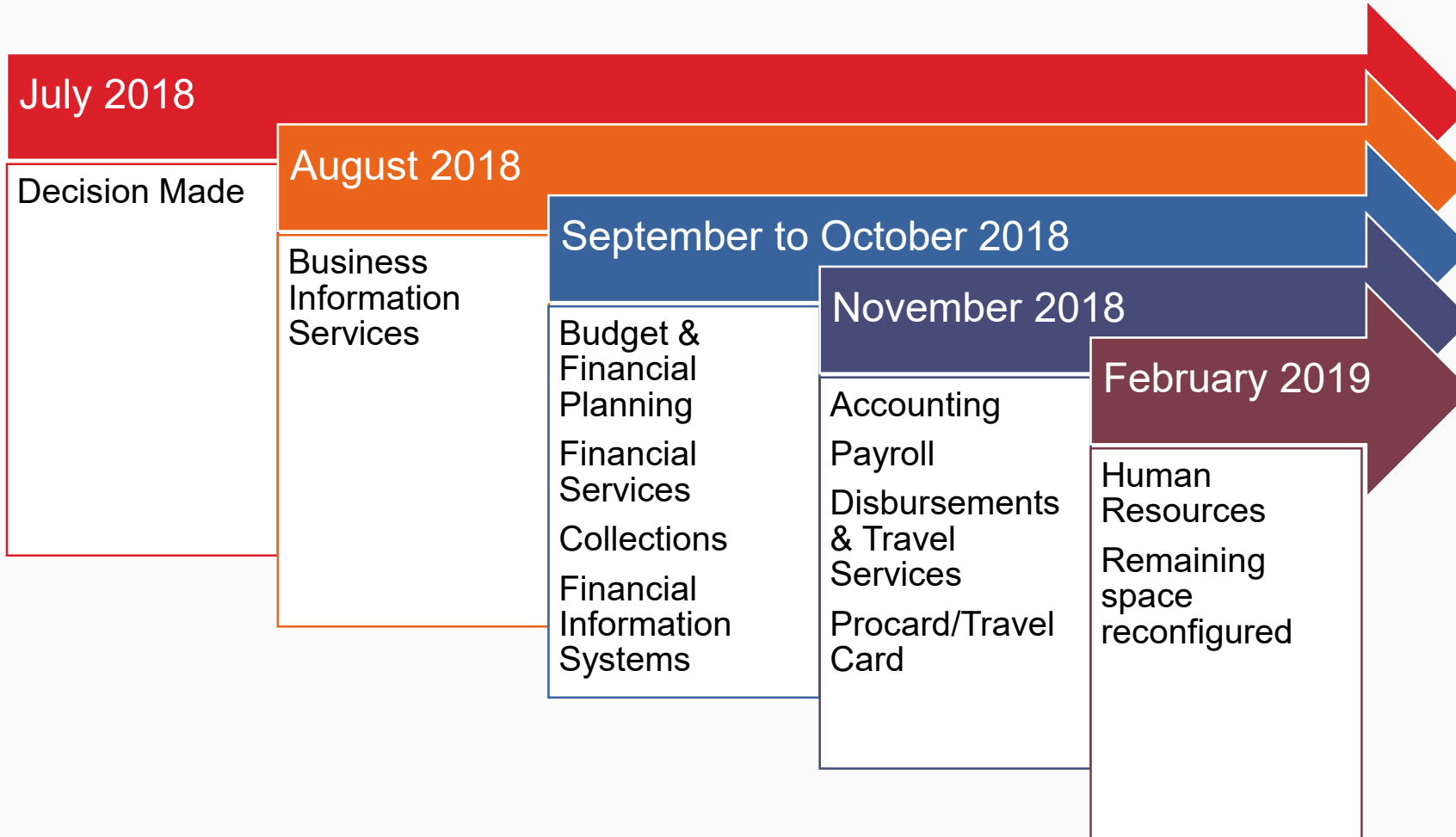


# The Solution

- Move large number of Business Affairs staff out of UTSA office space and into home work environment
  - Business Information Services
  - Budget & Financial Planning
  - Financial Affairs
  - Human Resources
- Assessed by position not by staff person



# Deployment Timeline





# Steps Involved

- Strategic communication
- Decisions to be made
  - Who would go and when?
  - How often would they come back to campus?
  - To stipend or not to stipend?
  - How to prepare our campus customers?
- Develop
  - Telecommuting agreement package
  - Standard Operating Procedures
  - Standard equipment package



# Steps Involved

- Create procedures for remaining paper processes
  - Check print
  - Mail for all telecommuting offices
  - Hard copy vendor forms and invoices
  - Hard copy data from Cashier's Office
- Standardize language for telecommuting job postings
- Build metric reports for processing departments

# Steps Involved

- Determine how to maintain employee engagement
- Logistical changes of physical location merging
  - Front office reception (shared)
  - Mail Services
  - Address changes on websites
- Create telecommuting review and assessment plan
- Establish contingency policies for home network outages, etc.

# Equipment

- Telecommuter equipment package
  - Computers and peripherals
  - Monitors
  - Quality camera with microphone (and privacy cover)
  - Speakers or Speakerphone
  - Wireless adaptor, if needed
  - Surge protector
  - Headset, if requested
  - Printer, if approved
  - Shredder, if needed
  - Basic supplies



# Equipment

- Recommendations made by IT office
- Replacement computers are now laptops with docking stations compatible with campus work stations
  - Laptops must have internal cameras and microphones
- Initial deployment only
  - Inexpensive desks, if needed
  - Office chairs moved home
- Removal of Equipment forms
- Signed equipment listing included in telecommuter agreement package



# Keys to Success



- Most technological offices deployed first
- Processes were primarily paperless
- Research by Budget & Financial Planning
- Cross-functional collaboration within Business Affairs
- Ongoing and transparent communication

# Keys to Success

- University Technology Solutions (IT) was brought in from the beginning
  - Equipment recommendations
  - Examination of every deployed computer
  - Increased VPN use
  - Remote support
  - Data security
  - Training on Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams
  - Two-Factor (DUO) security
- Staff used tools like MS Teams before leaving campus

# Keys to Success

- Institutional license to Adobe Creative Suite
- Embrace the technology
- Organized tracking by person

Name	Position Title	Pos #	Dept Name	Remote Eligible	Agreement Submitted	Rollout EffDt	Days Onsite	Desktop Issued	Year.Month Age of Desktop
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- Quarterly meetings with University Technology Solutions on telecommuting issues



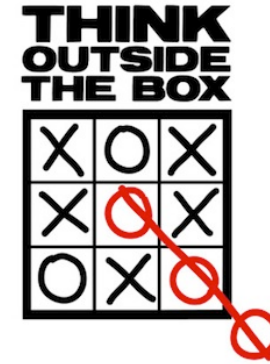
# Keys to Success



- Collaborations with other divisions
  - Facilities
  - Campus Services
- Helpful Surplus Property department
- Split campus office supplies among deploying staff
- Redeployed downsized large equipment to other areas, like Public Safety
- Employee engagement

# “Out of the Box” Ideas

- Campus Services’ parking solutions
- Ad hoc internal technology assistance team
- Employee Assistance Plan resources
- Inventory’s modifications for annual inventory processes
- First use of open “hoteling” work stations on campus
- Shared use of remaining on-campus space –tore down walls between divisions



# Communication

- Before deployment
  - Met with Directors individually first – a week before departmental meetings
  - Met with full departments
  - Department managers met individually with each staff person
- Open door policy on questions
- Presentation at campus Financial Area Representatives meeting
- Monthly/quarterly remote meetings with all Financial Affairs supervisors

# Challenges

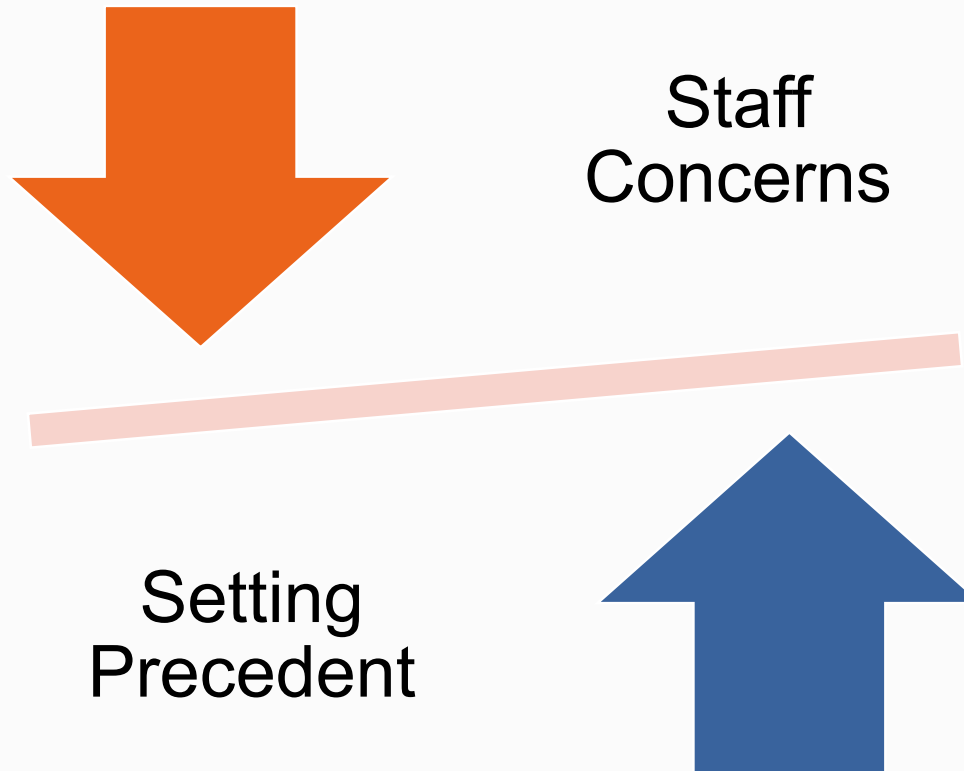
- Home Office Setup Challenges
  - UTSA uses old phone system
  - Physical location of office
  - Varying internet infrastructure
    - Some staff not comfortable with technology setup
- Loss of larger meeting spaces



# Challenges

- Equipment woes
- Inadequate reporting for metric tracking
- Equipment and technology knowledge deficiencies around campus
- Assuring campus that service level expectations would be the same
- A few resistant employees
- Retrieving items when telecommuter resigns

# Challenges



# Challenges

- Remaining office space required re-design



## BEFORE



## AFTER











# Benefits

- Approximately 120 employees full-time telecommuting
- 15,000 ft<sup>2</sup> office space freed
- Decreased carbon footprint
- Happier workforce with fewer expenses
- Decreased turnover



# Lessons Learned

*Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.*

Oprah Winfrey

# Lessons Learned

- Large administrative effort before and during deployment
- Ongoing administrative needs
  - Technology issues when on campus – e.g. printer access
  - Reservation of workspaces
  - Fewer people onsite to answer questions
- Don't be afraid to centralize processes
  - Work study students
  - Supplies
  - Personnel files

# Lessons Learned

- Careful expense tracking
- Easier for some positions to be away from campus than others
- Once they're gone, they don't want to come back
- Hidden costs (e.g. headsets, Wi-Fi adaptors)
- University Technology Solutions tracks telecommuter tickets distinctly
- Onsite space needed for new employee training and his/her trainer

# QUESTIONS





**Thank you!**

The University of Texas at San Antonio

**UTSA** Business Affairs

