



Travel Reimbursement Process Analysis: An Overview on Methodology

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Content

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- Background
- Travel Reimbursement Process Analysis
 - Objective
 - Methodology
- Conclusion



Objectives

- To provide an overview of the methodology used in a process analysis conducted at a major metropolitan research university
- To demonstrate some of the tools used
 - Engagement agreement
 - Interviews
 - Surveys
 - Process flow charts
 - Process observations
 - Document reviews



Background

- The travel department has undertaken some steps toward improving customer service:
 - documenting and disseminating operating procedures
 - updating job descriptions
- A request for consultation to take a systems level view led the Operational Excellence and Assessment Support office to perform a process analysis of the travel reimbursement operation
 - OEAS is part of the Planning and Evaluation Unit



Planning and Evaluation Functions

Assistant Vice President Information, Assessment, and Analysis (IAA)

- Coordination of IR, OEAS, and UAPS
- Associate VP Support
 - Policy and Process Development
 - Program Review Coordination Support
 - SACS Reaffirmation Coordination Support
 - Accountability
 - Information, Planning, and Analysis Coordination
 - Institutional Data and Reporting

Director and Data Administrator Institutional Research (IR)

- University Data Administration
- State Reporting
- All University-level External Reporting
- Data Warehouse and Data Mart Development
- Web Access to Institutional Data
- Regular Standard Management Reports
- Training and Access Control to Databases
- Surveys from External Agencies
- Program Review Data Support
- Oversight for Faculty Activity Reporting System
- Knowledge and Access to Relevant External Databases
- Walk-in Support for Data Requests

Director Operational Excellence and Assessment Support (OEAS)

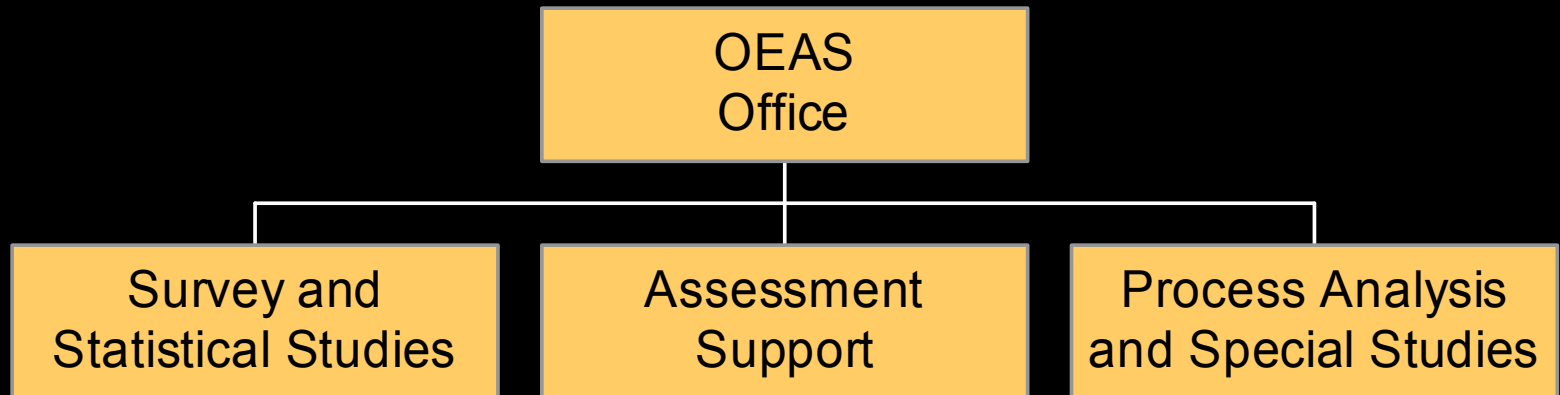
- Institutional Effectiveness Coordination and Support
- UAC support
- Unit and program support
- Regular University-level Surveys
- Support for Ad Hoc Surveys and Statistical Studies
- Clearinghouse for Internal Surveys
- Process Analysis Support
- Training on Assessment and Process Analysis
- SACS Reaffirmation Support
- Program Accreditation Support
- Program Review Support
- Walk-in Support for Survey and Process Analysis

Director University Analysis and Planning Support (UAPS)

- Enrollment Projections and Planning Support
- Management Model Development Support
- Planning Support
- Benchmarking Support
- Short-term Analyses to Support Special Requests and inquiries
- Proactive What-If Analyses
- Strategic Plan Development
- Environmental Scanning
- Exploratory Data Analysis (Ah Ha Support)
- Policy Analysis Support
- Walk-in Support for Analysis



OEAS Office Organization





The Travel Reimbursement Analysis - Objective

- To examine the travel reimbursement process in order to identify potential areas for improvement



The Travel Reimbursement Analysis - Approach

- Process Improvement Project
 - Analysis
 - Process oriented view
 - Functional view
 - Design
 - Implementation



The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – The First Step

- Development of an Engagement Agreement or Statement of Work
 - Overview and Background
 - Scope
 - Task Structure
 - Project Schedule
- Contract between client and consultant



Operational Excellence and Assessment Support

OEAS ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT

Title: Finance and Accounting Travel Reimbursement Process

Sponsors: Mr. William Merck, VP for Administration and Finance
Ms. Linda Bonta, University Controller, Finance and Accounting

Overview: The Travel Unit in Finance and Accounting is currently examining its travel reimbursement processes in order to reduce the number of customer complaints, reduce the voucher error rate, and improve the timeliness of reimbursements. The travel reimbursement processes include cash advances, airline payments, rental car payments, and traveler reimbursements. Finance and Accounting is currently implementing a number of changes based on the recommendations of earlier studies and an internal review. The sponsors have additionally requested that the office of Operational Excellence and Assessment Support (OEAS) be engaged to take a "systems level" view of the travel claim/reimbursement process to see if other improvements can be made. This involves reviewing the processes (both internal and external to the Travel Unit), identifying potential areas for improvement, and making appropriate recommendations. The key objectives are to establish and maintain excellent customer relations with travelers and vendors, reduce the complexity of the process for travelers, remain within compliance based on State Comptroller mandates (error rate and reimbursement timeliness), and achieve an excellent work environment for the travel claim processors.

Background:

The Travel Unit within Finance and Accounting is part of the Division of Administration and Finance. The Travel Unit is currently responsible for processing all aspects of the travel process, including the TARs (Travel authorizations), cash advances, airline and rental car payments, and traveler reimbursements; as well as providing training to the departmental travel processors and the travelers. In addition, the travel processors interact directly with departmental processors and travelers to resolve any discrepancies found in the travel documentation. Several studies of the voucher payment processes have been recently conducted (e.g., the recent (1998) Industrial Engineering Senior Design Team and an earlier study conducted by Quality Initiatives). These studies indicated a need for the development and documentation of standard operating procedures within the Travel Unit, improvement of the processes for disseminating information to departments, providing a checklist for travelers (i.e., a travel envelope), developing a mechanism for soliciting feedback from the customers, and conducting proactive training of departmental travel processors.

Project Engagement Agreement



Personnel:

Key Sponsor Contacts:

Mr. William Merck, Vice President of Administration and Finance
Ms. Linda Bonta, University Controller, Finance and Accounting
Ms. Michelle Meister, Coordinator Management Services

OEAS Personnel:

Dr. Julia Pet-Armacost, Director of OEAS
Ms. Angela Albert, Associate Director of OEAS
Ms. Kathleen Coleman, OEAS Program Assistant

Confidentiality:

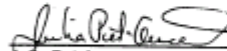
The work conducted under this engagement agreement is intended for the sole use of the sponsor. OEAS will not disclose any information developed without the permission of the sponsor. Normally, the final report is published as a OEAS Technical Report and made available to the public. However, any such public distribution of the technical report must be approved by the sponsor. Because the OEAS office reports to Academic Affairs, periodic reports are made to the Provost and the President regarding the status of OEAS activities. Work on this project will likely be discussed in one or more of those periodic reports.

Agreement:

The undersigned agree that the structure presented above describes the nature and scope of the work to be accomplished during this engagement. Changes to the scope or direction of work will be accompanied by a modification to this agreement.

FOR:

OEAS:




Julia Pet-Armacost
Director of OEAS

3/23/00

Date

Finance and Accounting:

 3/23/00

Linda Bonta
University Controller, Finance and Accounting



William Merck
Vice President, Administration and Finance



The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – Methodology

- Structured interviews
- Design and administration of two surveys
 - Traveler, Travel preparer
- Flowcharting
- Process observations



The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – Structured Interviews

- Travel department staff (10 people) were interviewed
 - To gather information on current problems as perceived by the staff
 - To gather information on alternatives to current problems



The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – Structured Interviews

- Content of Interview
 - Difficulties and Obstacles
 - Procedures
 - Errors, types and sources
 - Opportunities, Recommendations
 - Open ended question
- Interview form developed in consultation with client



Travel Processor Interview

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Travel Processor: _____

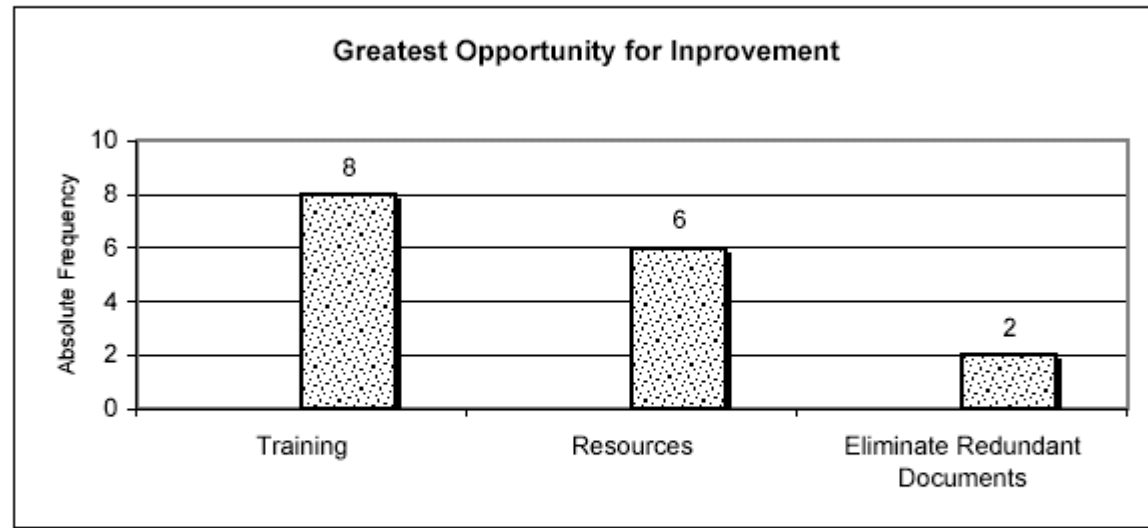
Position: A&P OPS USPS Other _____

Position Title: _____

Years of Experience: _____

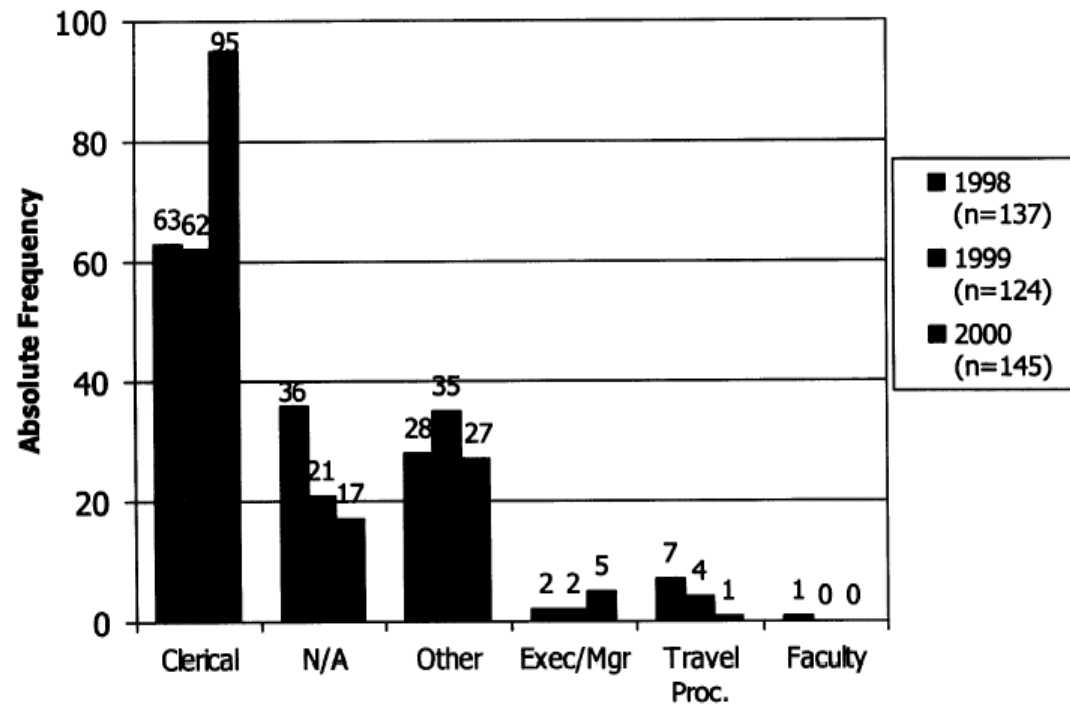
Accounts: _____

-
1. What do you like most about your work?
 2. What do you like least about your work?
 3. What are the greatest challenges that you face in your work?
 4. What creates the greatest difficulties in getting your job done?
 5. What are the biggest obstacles to processing travel claims?
 6. What things slow down travel processing?
 7. What would make your work easier?
 8. What would make your work more enjoyable?
 9. What is the greatest opportunity for improving travel claim processing?
 10. How well do travelers understand the procedures?
 11. How well do the departmental preparers understand the procedures?
 12. What are the major sources of errors?
 13. Who causes the errors?
 14. Who is primarily responsible for errors?
 15. What do you think about the "travel envelope"?
 16. The question you wish we had asked you.





Participation in Travel Training by Job Type





The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – Two Surveys

- Traveler survey
 - 650 questionnaires distributed
 - 150 responses (23%)
- Preparer survey
 - 200 questionnaires distributed
 - 147 responses (74%)



The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – Traveler Survey

- Overall satisfaction about the reimbursement process
- Expectations and actual experiences
- Open ended questions



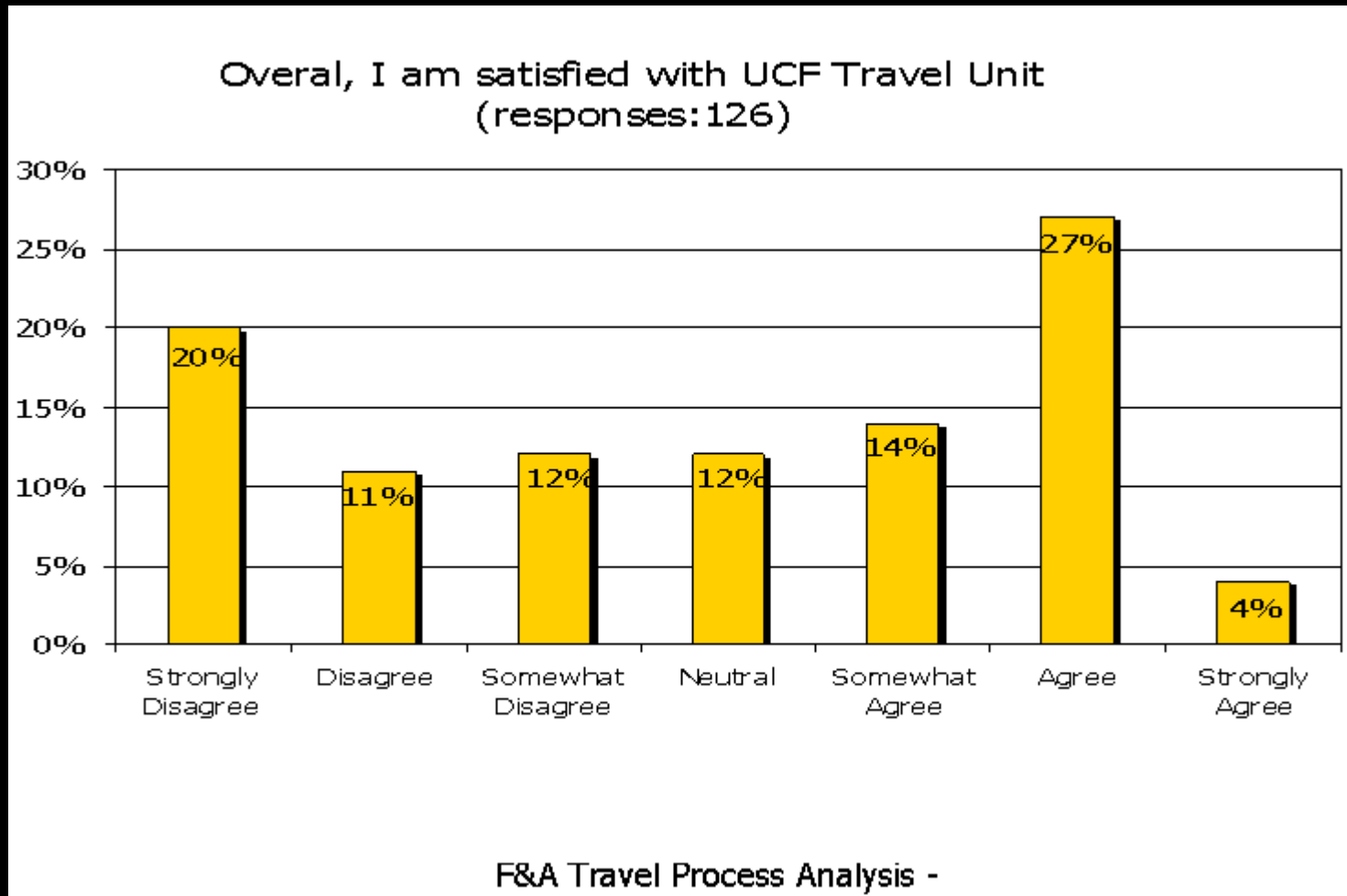
The UCF Travel Unit is working to improve its travel reimbursement processes. This is important so that customers are satisfied, the work environment is enhanced, and the unit remains within State compliance regulations. Your participation is very important in order to obtain an accurate assessment of the current travel process and to determine where to make improvements. This survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please send to the department of Operational Excellence and Assessment Support. **DO NOT FOLD.**

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the UCF Travel Unit.

Strongly Disagree
 Disagree
 Somewhat Disagree
 Neutral
 Somewhat Agree
 Agree
 Strongly Agree

Each item below describes an expectation about your experience with the Travel Unit here at UCF. On the left, tell us how **important** it is for the Travel Unit to meet this expectation. On the right tell us how **strongly you agree** that the Travel unit has met your expectation.

How important is it for the Travel Unit to meet this expectation?					How strongly do you agree that the Travel unit has met your expectation?										
Very important	Not very important	Neutral	Important	Very important	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know			
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. The Travel Unit personnel are helpful.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3. The Travel Unit personnel are respectful.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	4. The Travel Unit personnel exhibit strong verbal communication skills.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	5. The Travel Unit personnel exhibit strong written communication skills.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	6. The Travel Unit personnel provide me with consistent information about travel procedures.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	7. The Travel Unit personnel provide me with accurate information about travel procedures.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	8. The Travel Unit personnel process travel reimbursement vouchers in a timely manner.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	9. The Travel Unit personnel are consistent in their interpretation of Florida Statutes.					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA TRAVEL PREPARER SURVEY

The UCF Travel Unit is working to improve its travel reimbursement processes. This is important so that customers are satisfied, the work environment is enhanced and the unit remains within State compliance regulations. Your participation is very important in order to obtain an accurate assessment of the current travel process and to determine where to make improvements. This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please fold and staple or tape the completed form and place in campus mail, or you may fax it to (407) 375-4339. THANK YOU!

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the UCF Travel Unit.

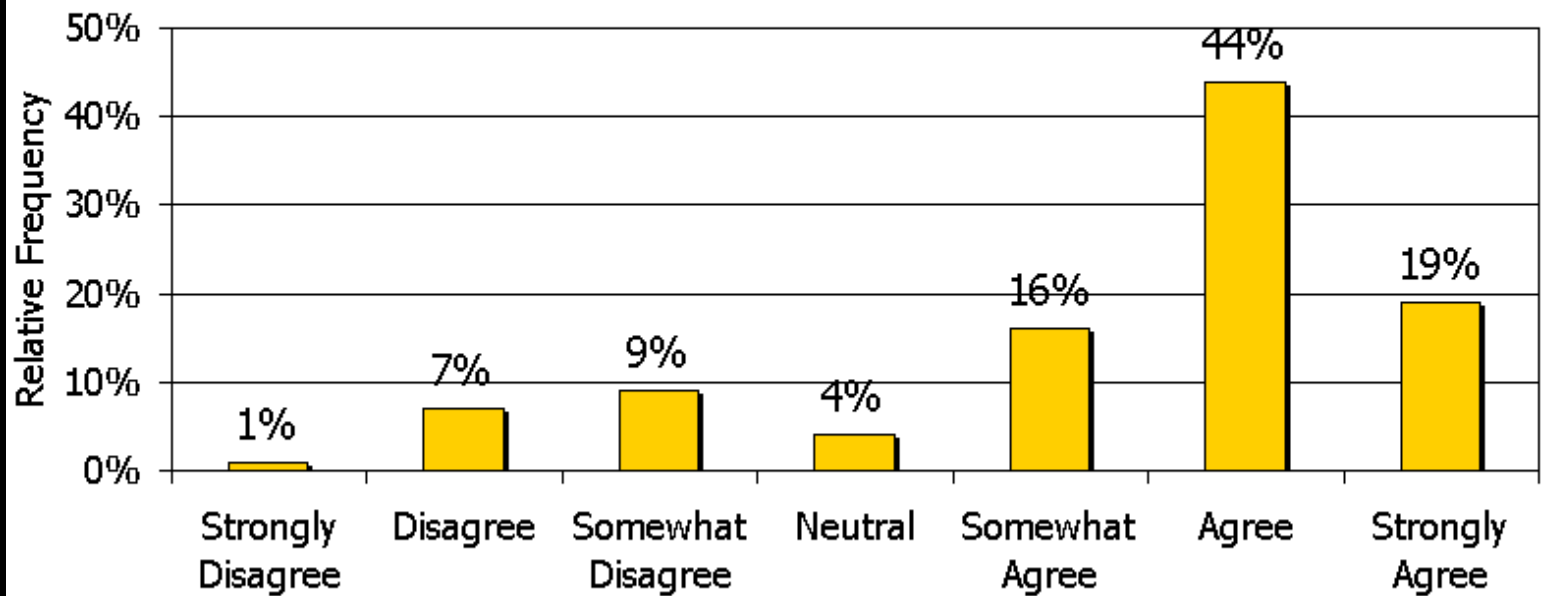
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

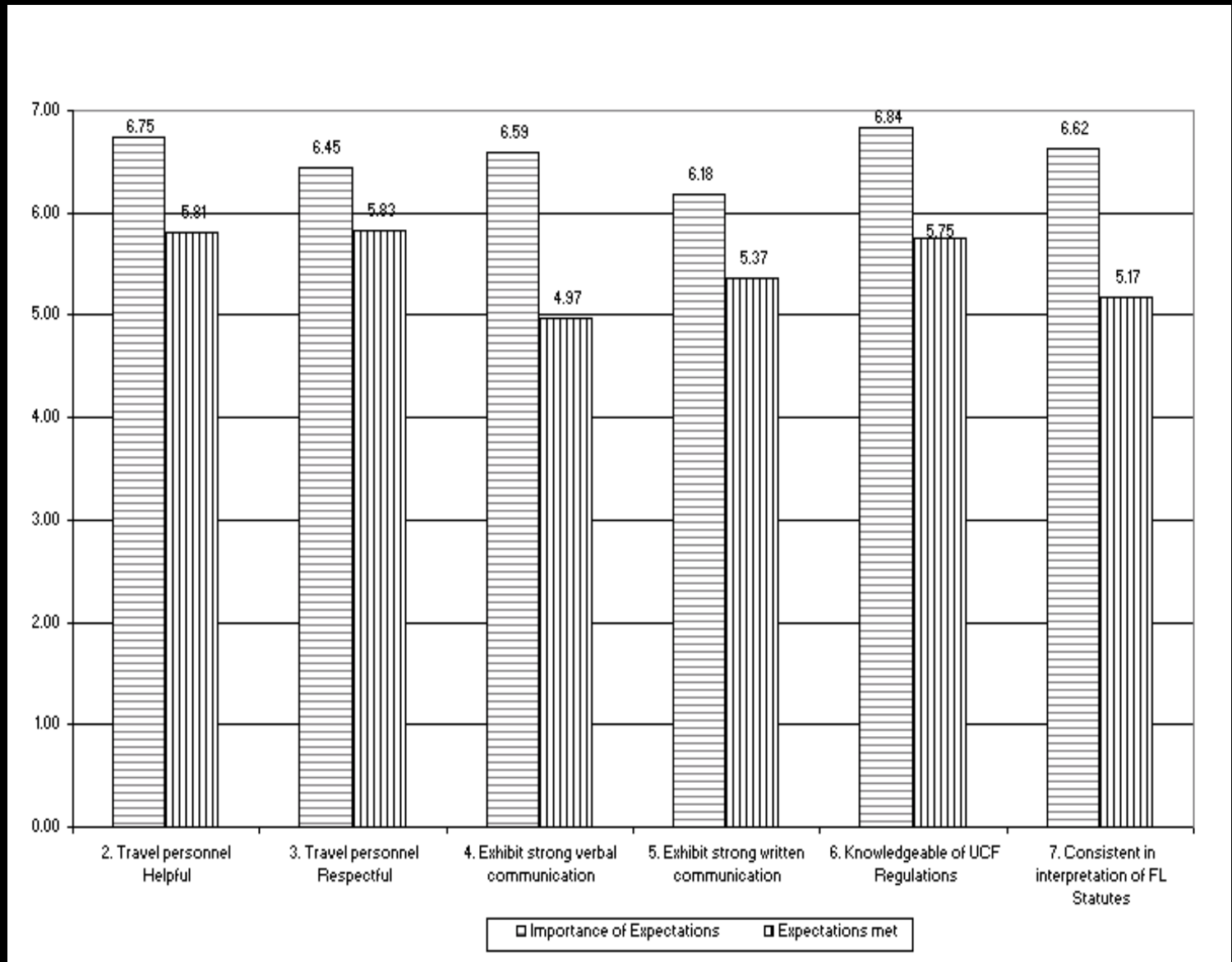
Each item below describes an expectation about your experience with the Travel Unit here at UCF. On the left, tell us how important it is for the Travel Unit to meet this expectation. On the right tell us how strongly you agree that the Travel Unit has met your expectation.

	2 Not very important	4 Neutral	6 Important		2 Disagree	4 Neutral	6 Agree	8 Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. The UCF Travel Unit personnel are helpful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. The UCF Travel Unit personnel are respectful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. The Travel Unit personnel exhibit strong verbal communication skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. The Travel Unit personnel exhibit strong written communication skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. The Travel Unit personnel are knowledgeable on UCF regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



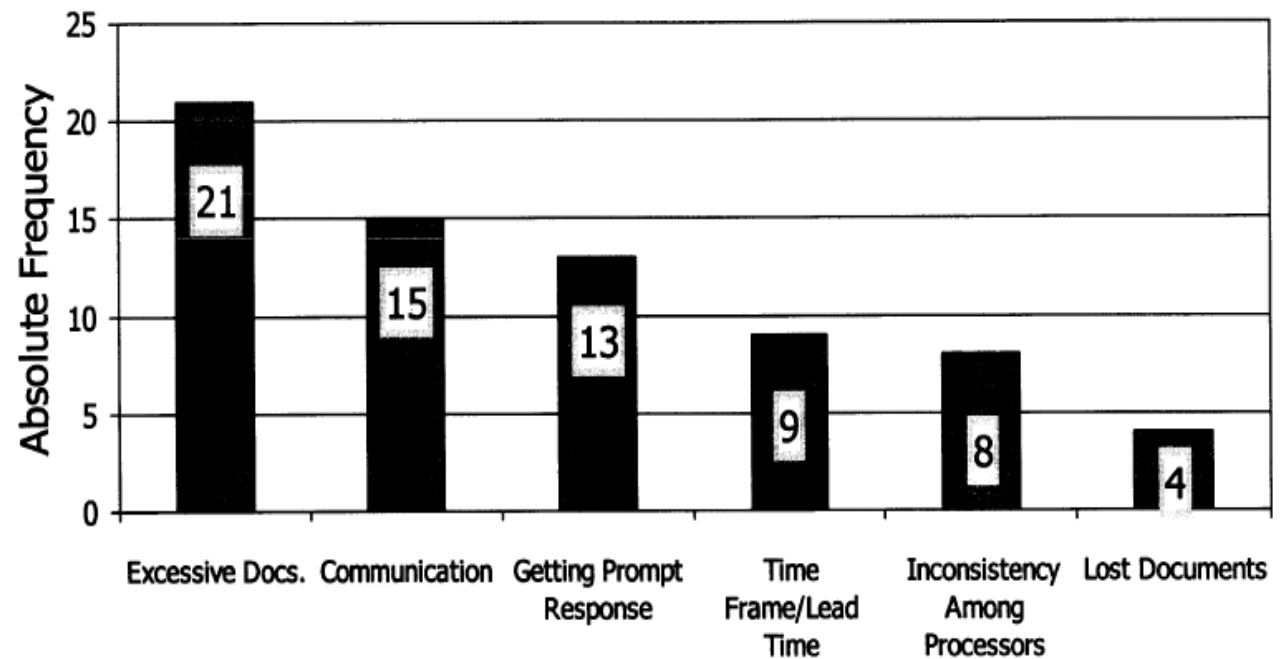
Overall, I am satisfied with the UCF Travel Unit
(n=135)





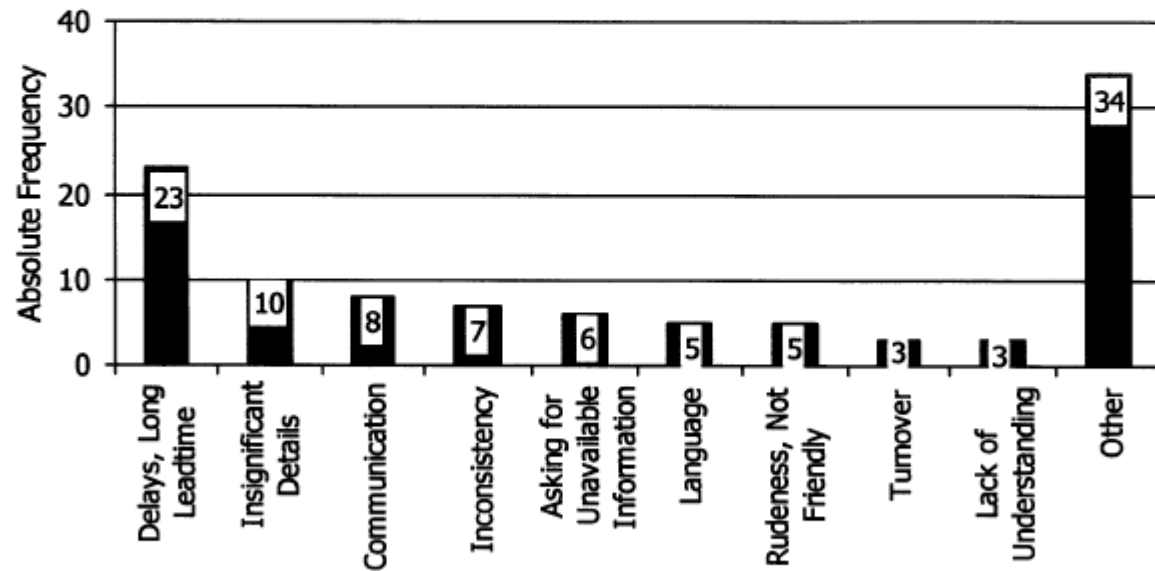


Most Common Challenges with Travel Unit (Preparer survey, n=70)





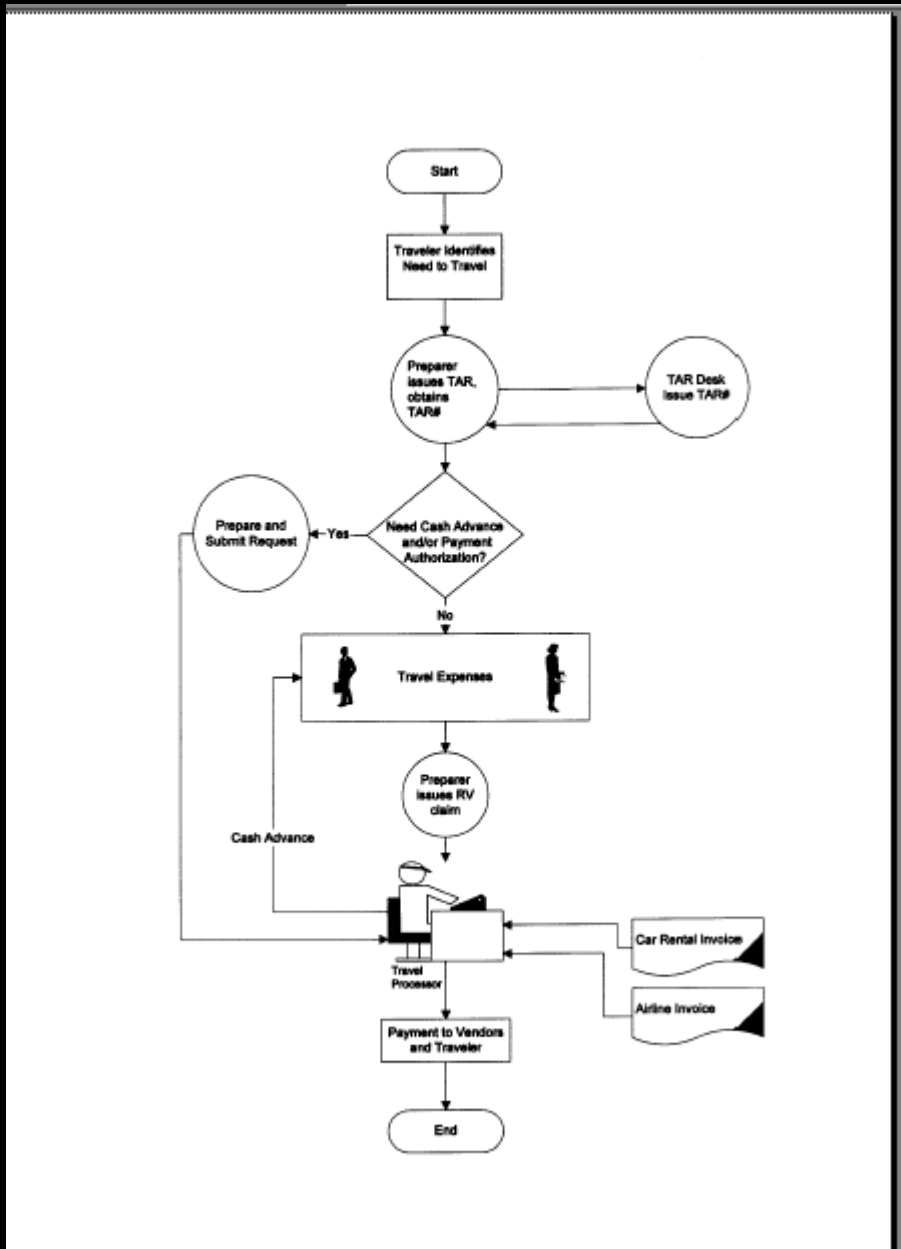
Most common challenges with Travel Unit (Traveler Survey, n=104)





The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – Flowcharting

- Detailed flowcharts of the different sub-processes were prepared and reviewed to determine inefficiencies
 - Travel authorization
 - Airline, car rental
 - Cash advance
 - Payment authorization
 - Reimbursement processing
 - Purchasing card

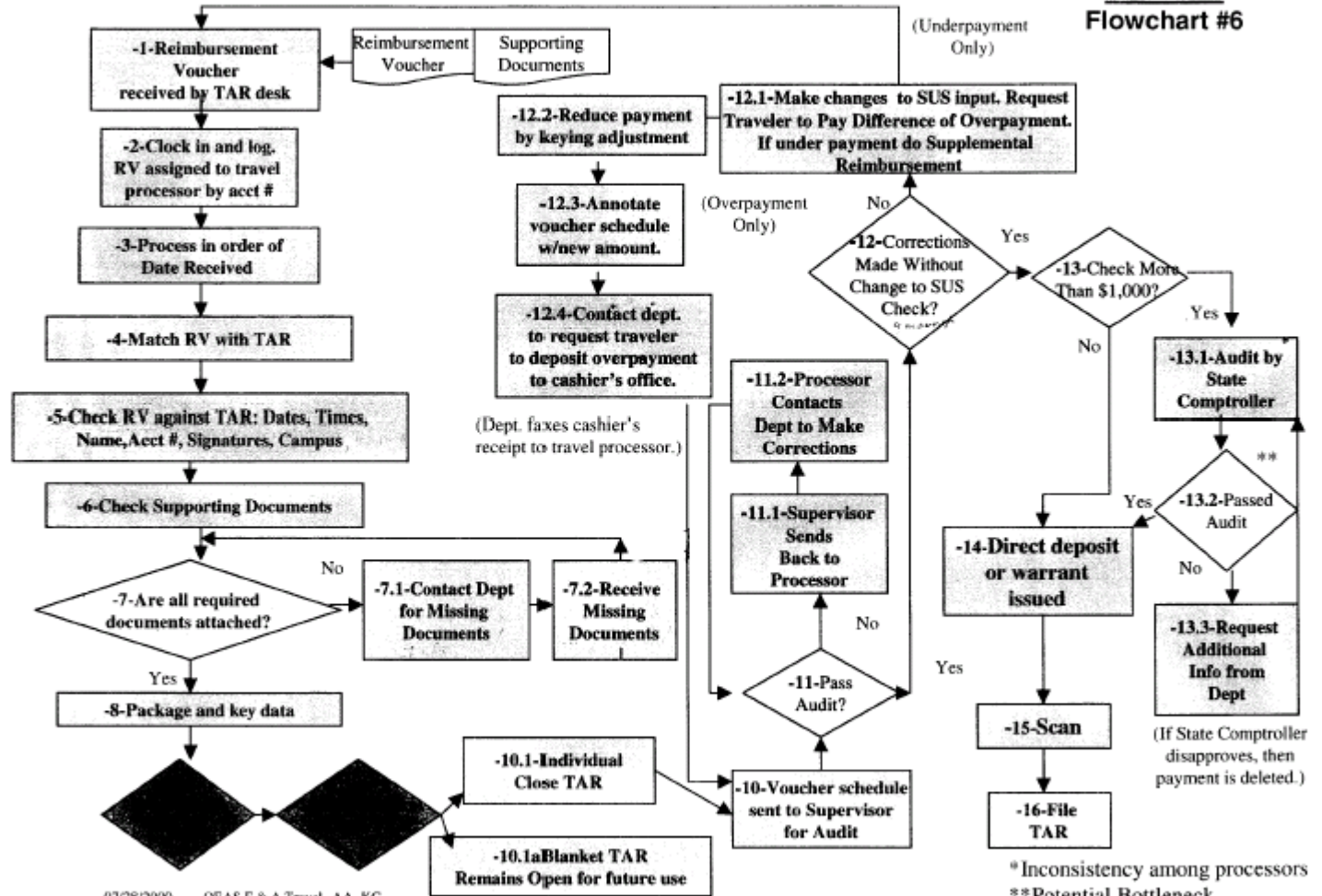


Reimbursement voucher processing flowchart



(If traveler has a Direct Deposit, traveler is notified by a State Comptroller's Remittance Advice. Warrants are mailed via campus mail to department. If traveler is requesting to pick up check, traveler must submit a justification memo to be approved by Travel Manager.)

Reimbursement Voucher Flowchart #6





The Travel Reimbursement Analysis – Process Observations

- Process observations were used to determine activities and durations
- Process observations
 - 7 processors; 84 documents processed
 - Phone calls; interruptions; trips to photocopier, etc.



FLOW PROCESS CHART

Project: _____

Charted by: Héctor López

Subject: _____

Date: _____

Resource: _____

Preceding Operation: _____

Sheet: ___ of ___

Seq/ Ref No.	Distance in Feet	Unit Time (M/S)	Chart Symbol	Task Description	Additional Information
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					



Process Observations Summary Sheet

Analyst: _____

Project: _____

Date: _____

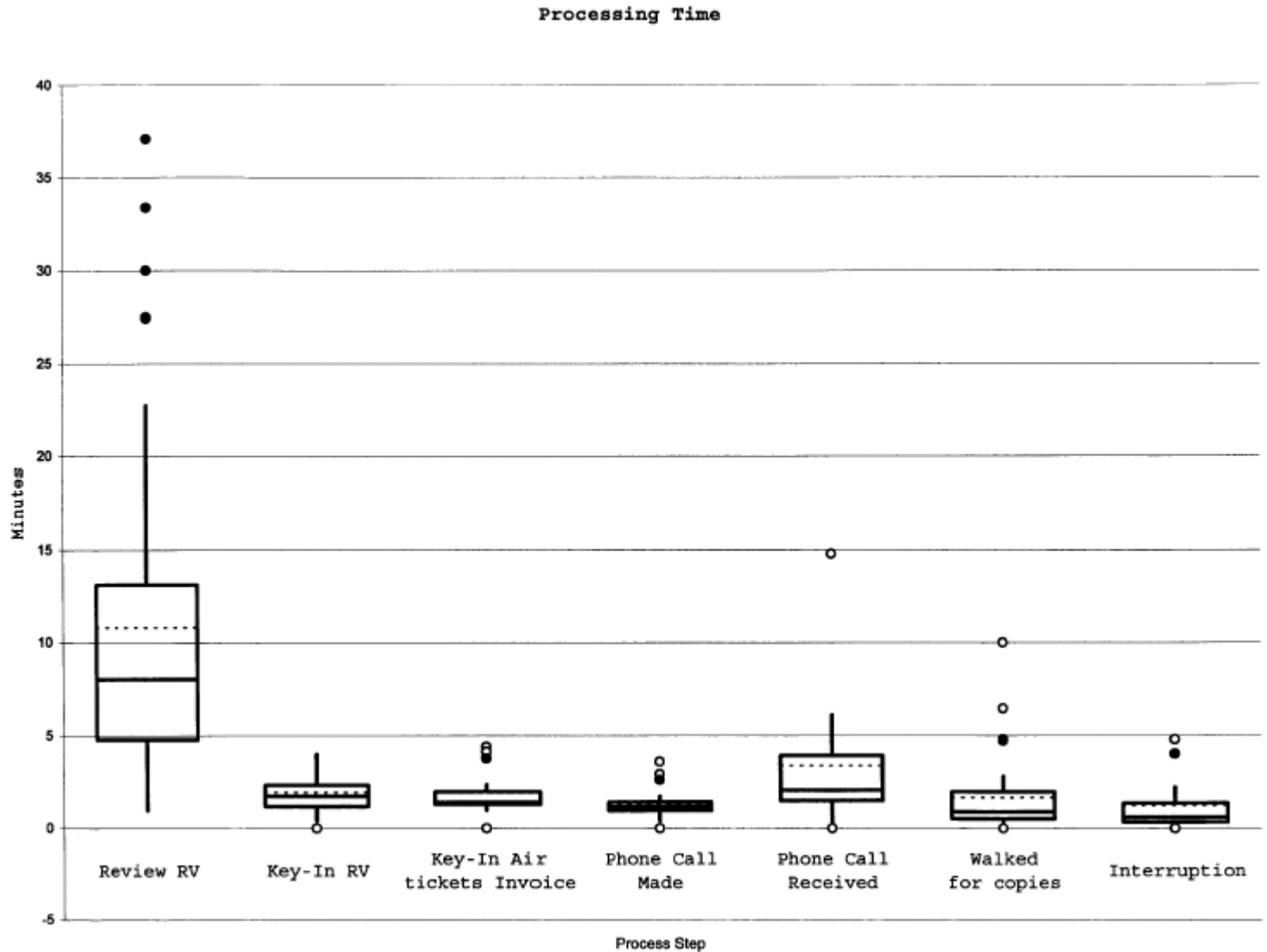
Operation: _____

Processing Strategy – Reimbursement Vouchers

Customer Service

Observations:

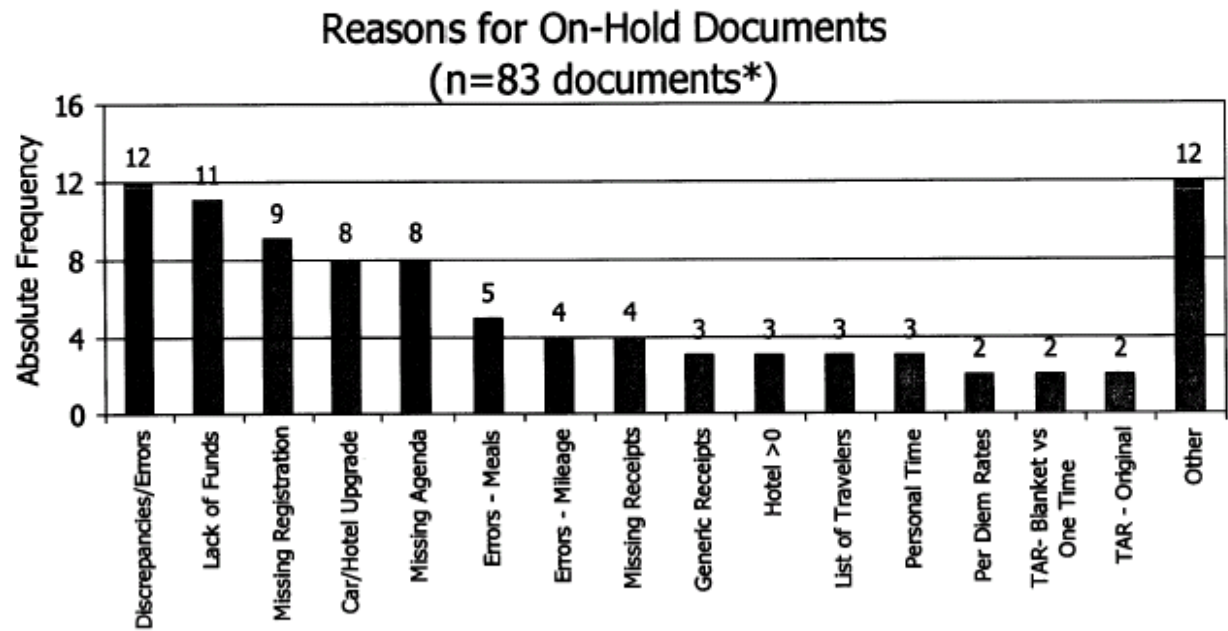
Activity	Frequency	Total Time	Average Time	Minimum Time	Maximum Time
Review document					
Make phone call					
Receive Phone call					
Walk away for information					
Walk away for photocopies					
Interruption					
Break					
Data entry					
Other					





Document Reviews

- Review of on-hold documents
 - 7 processors; 83 documents
- Lead-time analysis
 - 231 documents

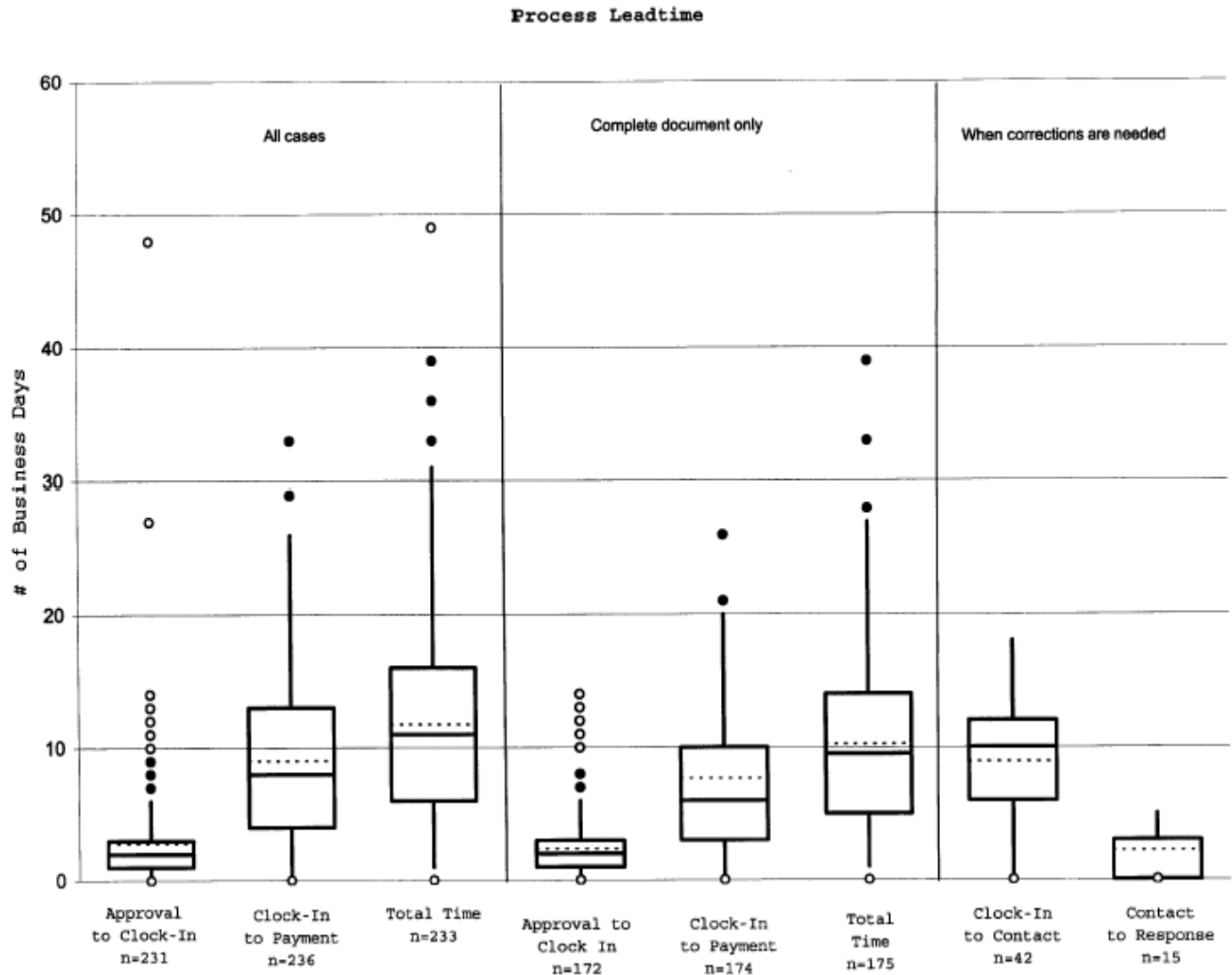


*more than one reason in some documents

Lead time data



Course/Total	Number #	Document	Department	Approval Date	Clock In Date	Keyed In (Payment CLK)	Label (Payment Month and Year)	Actual Lead Time - Approval to Clock In	Actual Lead Time - Clock In to Payment	Actual Total Lead Time - Approval to Payment Date
1	25729	RV	0390000 Veterans Affairs	16-Mar-00	20-Mar-00	23-Mar-00	Mar-00	2	3	5
2	25729	RV	20-02-099	13-Mar-00	15-Mar-00	23-Mar-00	Mar-00	2	6	8
4	25729	RV	07-30-004	17-Mar-00	21-Mar-00	23-Mar-00	Mar-00	2	2	4
5	25729	RV	07-30-004	17-Mar-00	20-Mar-00	23-Mar-00	Mar-00	1	3	4
6	25729	RV	07-30-004	17-Mar-00	21-Mar-00	23-Mar-00	Mar-00	2	2	4
7	25729	RV	07-30-004	17-Mar-00	20-Mar-00	23-Mar-00	Mar-00	1	3	4
8	28411	RV	Continuing Education 105600	15-Mar-00	16-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	Mar-00	1	10	11
9	28411	RV	Student Government 10-80-001	15-Mar-00	16-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	Mar-00	1	10	11
11	28411	RV	10-01-031 (F527)	16-Mar-00	16-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	Mar-00	0	10	10
12	28402	GT Reg	Student Government	20-Mar-00	21-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	Mar-00	1	7	8
13	28416	RV	10-20-000 Comp Svcs & Tel	16-Mar-00	20-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	Mar-00	2	6	10
14	28416	RV	10-20-000 Comp Svcs & Tel	16-Mar-00	20-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	Mar-00	2	6	10
15	28416	RV	10-20-000 Comp Svcs & Tel	16-Mar-00	17-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	Mar-00	1	9	10
20	28554	RV	11-36-000 Music	13-Mar-00	21-Mar-00	31-Mar-00	Mar-00	6	6	14
22	28554	RV	11-73-000 Psychology	13-Mar-00	15-Mar-00	31-Mar-00	Mar-00	2	12	14
23	28554	RV	11-36-000 Music	13-Mar-00	23-Mar-00	31-Mar-00	Mar-00	6	6	14
25	27753	RV	1805000 Criminal Justice?	30-Mar-00	31-Mar-00	13-Apr-00	Apr-00	1	9	10
26	27753	RV	10-80-035	3-Apr-00	3-Apr-00	13-Apr-00	Apr-00	0	6	6
29	27753	RV	13-10-032	27-Mar-00	29-Mar-00	14-Apr-00	Apr-00	2	12	14
30	27753	RV	20-21-000	4-Apr-00	7-Apr-00	15-Apr-00	Apr-00	3	5	8
35	28294	RV	1190000	29-Mar-00	31-Mar-00	19-Apr-00	Apr-00	2	13	15
36	28294	RV	1190000	29-Mar-00	30-Mar-00	19-Apr-00	Apr-00	1	14	15
39	28296	PA	118-4000	N/A	12-Apr-00	19-Apr-00	Apr-00		5	
41	28296	RV	1320000 Accounting	29-Mar-00	31-Mar-00	19-Apr-00	Apr-00	2	13	15
42	28296	RV	1805000	30-Mar-00	31-Mar-00	19-Apr-00	Apr-00	1	13	14
49	30555	RV	10-01-007	24-Apr-00	26-Apr-00	3/12/2000	May-00	4	10	14
51	30555	RV	Undergraduate Admissions	24-Apr-00	1-May-00	12-May-00	May-00	5	9	14
53	30555	RV	11-84-008	24-Apr-00	1-May-00	12-May-00	May-00	5	9	14
55	30555	RV	04106035	25-Apr-00	26-Apr-00	12-May-00	May-00	1	12	13
56	30844	RV	11-56-008	28-Apr-00	2-May-00	16-May-00	May-00	2	10	12
57	30844	RV	11-72-000 Psychology	28-Apr-00	3-May-00	16-May-00	May-00	3	9	12
58	30844	RV	11-72-008	28-Apr-00	3-May-00	16-May-00	May-00	3	9	12
59	30844	RV	22-10-000	10-May-00	12-May-00	16-May-00	May-00	2	2	4
60	30844	RV	11-72-008	28-Apr-00	3-May-00	16-May-00	May-00	3	9	12
61	30844	RV	11-40-000 Theatre	2-May-00	2-May-00	16-May-00	May-00	0	10	10
62	30844	RV	11-64-000 Sociology?	28-Apr-00	1-May-00	16-May-00	May-00	1	11	12
63	30848	RV	H&PA Nursing? 16-40-000	20-Apr-00	24-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	2	16	18
64	30848	RV	13-23-000	19-Apr-00	25-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	4	15	19
65	30848	RV	1805000	14-Apr-00	24-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	6	16	22
66	30848	RV	Public Administration? 1630000	20-Apr-00	24-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	2	16	18
67	30848	RV	Communicative Disorders 1870000	17-Apr-00	17-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	0	21	21
68	30848	RV	1940000	20-Apr-00	24-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	2	16	18
69	30848	RV	Marketing 1321-000	20-Apr-00	24-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	2	16	18
70	30848	RV	Marketing 1321-001	20-Apr-00	24-Apr-00	16-May-00	May-00	2	16	18
71	32796	RV	01-01-000 President's Office	31-May-00	1-Jun-00	5-Jun-00	Jun-00	1	2	3
72	32796	RV	0580000 Human Resources?	31-May-00	1-Jun-00	5-Jun-00	Jun-00	1	2	3





Conclusion

- The tools used in study are simple, available to any practitioner, and useful in looking for improvement opportunities
- Other tools (Fishbone diagrams, root cause analysis, control charts, computer simulation, IDEF, etc.) are also available
- Value of process analysis in Institutional Research