

# Professional Services Unit Updates: JANUARY 2021

## Marketing and Communications

### TEAM DEVELOPMENT

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#### Staffing

Efforts over the last few months have focused on filling open positions within the new organizational structure. To date, all positions have been filled with the exception of a marketing strategist for the college (interviews are set to begin this week); communications manager; internal/executive communications specialist; and web coordinator.

#### Training and Effectiveness

Onboarding sessions have been held as new individuals have joined the team, allowing all an opportunity to meet with agency/college leadership and learn more about the brands in which the team elevates. Full-team training sessions on workflows, best practices, customer excellence, project management, and other priority items are set to begin in early February.

#### Current Efforts

In addition to the day-to-day work that continues to come in, the client liaison team (our Marketing Strategy team) has spent the last few months meeting with individual unit leaders throughout the college and agencies to spark partnerships, learn more about the goals of the units, and begin to develop strategic marketing and communications plans in tandem with unit leaders.

### GETTING TO KNOW THE TEAM

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While individual communications have been distributed to unit leaders as new members have joined the MarComm team, this week, more widespread information will be distributed across AgriLife to help introduce the team, outline services provided and help all understand how to work with the new MarComm unit.

Upcoming planned communications include:

- Marketing and Communications contacts, role of marketing strategists (i.e.: client liaison team)
- Outline of services provided by MarComm
- Guidance for working effectively with MarComm for optimum outcomes
- Our commitment to excellence, industry best practices and continuous improvement

Additionally, there are plans to engage in internal, virtual roadshows in the coming weeks to help individuals at the department/programmatic level understand the team's role and how we can best advance goals through strategic partnership and planning.

### BRAND ASSESSMENT / DIGITAL REVIEW

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The *brand assessment* project with our digital and brand strategy partner, [New City](#), has kicked off with an expected completion of April 1. Over the next few weeks, the group will be involved in stakeholder interviews, internal/external surveys, market research and collateral review in an effort to begin to unify our brand in a cohesive and intentional manner. The *web/digital review* project across AgriLife has also launched, with Extension's web presence discovery set to begin later this spring. Additional information will be shared as this important project moves forward.

# Business Services

## PROGRESS REPORT

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Met personally with each department head and business staff to answer questions and provide information. Identified eight Senior Business Administrators to lead business service units

- One resigned 9/21/2020 and position re-filled 11/1/2020
- One retired effective 12/31/2020 (position replaced internally through promotion effective 12/1/2020)

Moved all salaries (circ. \$2.9M) associated with centralization of 48 positions to Business Services. Aligned staff into respective service units and made necessary changes in Workday and FAMIS to reflect new structure. Moved the Temple business staff under the Central Business Office. Changed the reporting relationship of the business staff member at McGregor to report in through Animal Science.

**Cost Savings:** To date, cost savings are in excess of \$440,000

## ONGOING ACTIVITY

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Continue to evaluate staffing and workload across the business service units and adjusting staffing ratios based on volume of transactions and other requirements of the departments served. Metrics include:

- Research expenditures
- Grant activity and its impact on payroll
- # of new employees hired (How many of those are grads/foreign nationals)
- Purchasing Volume / Vouchers Processed
- Duties unique to a particular unit

Implementing changes to administrative processes in departments to bring consistency across the service units (e.g., requiring use of iPayments and AggieBuy as the default systems for invoicing and purchasing)

Reviewing unit accounting practices to ensure compliance with standards established by University/Agency policy.

Business Administrators are assisting and training departmental staff with duty changes associated with the consolidation of Business Services. All have been working toward consolidating duties within their respective Business Services Teams.

At least monthly meetings (more if requested) between Director of Business Services and leadership team to discuss any issues or changes that we need to discuss with regards to centralization.

Focusing on customer service benchmarks.

## SERVICE BENCHMARKS

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The business service centers will adhere to the following benchmarks:

1. Staffing levels will allow for a timely response to customer needs and include provisions for emergency or special handling of projects deemed critical.
2. Staff should be knowledgeable of business processes and equally capable of delivering information in a manner that is understandable to the customer and shows sensitivity to the customer's needs.
3. Business processes will be documented to the extent practical and available to customers as training aids.

4. Feedback loops will be built into administrative processes to ensure good communication between the customer and staff regarding progress towards completion.
5. Customer satisfaction feedback will be routinely gathered, analyzed, and reported to advisory team.

## Information Technology

### IT STAFF CENTRALIZATION

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Working to complete filling two open positions related to System Administration and one IT support position recently vacated.

### UNIFIED IT ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE

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Ongoing planning regarding the migration of the college departments to a unified IT environment is still underway. Formal communications on this topic will begin in February starting with a presentation and discussion with the customer advisory team during the January meeting.

Finalizing logistics for the March 1<sup>st</sup> launch of the AgriLife Research Cloud (ARC) service center where researchers can procure IT specialists and cloud-based solutions to support their research initiatives. More detailed information on this offering will be announced in February.

A survey of College server inventory has begun to facilitate the implementation of a security and compliance program to meet the requirements of TAMU policies.

### CUSTOMER SUPPORT & SERVICE METRICS

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A real-time dashboard to track IT customer support and IT staff performance metrics across the state has been created. These metrics will soon be published regularly on the [professional service's website](#).

A new updated AgriLife IT website will be launched in February based upon the IT service catalog including new features such as IT service notices, live chat feature, IT news, and blog featuring the latest service announcements and updates on IT initiatives.

A customer satisfaction survey was launched in December for all Agrilife TechBuy orders.

### GENERAL SERVICE UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The formal launch of [Microsoft Phone Service](#) will be announced within the next few weeks to regional centers. This innovative service will reduce operating costs for units while providing the latest in telecommunication technology.

A new and improved version of the [AgriLife People Directory](#) will be launched in early February. Updates include an improved user interface and self-service features where users can opt into or manage various IT services. If you have not checked lately please review your current listing in the directory and verify your information is correct or update your profile.

Rolling out Microsoft A5 licensing to agency employees in February. This will enable phone conference number, Teams Live event service for all employees, and enhanced security features.

# Digital Education

## TEAM DEVELOPMENT

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### Staffing

We will be working to formalize our organizational structure based on the recommendations received from the function audit that our team underwent during fall of 2020. Formal communication related to our new team structure and services offered will be shared through widespread communication starting in February.

### Current Efforts

In addition to continued work on existing projects, our Product Development and Business Development teams have been working diligently to align our major initiatives with goals set by agency leadership in support of the strategic planning that is taking place across our organization. Our primary focus will be an emphasis on efficiency and excellence for all product assessment, strategy, and development as we look towards the future.

## SALESFORCE/COMMERCECLOUD

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Starting this Spring we will begin a 15-week implementation and migration for a new Customer Relationship Management system and eCommerce solution to assist in creating a seamless user experience for individuals engaging with digital products that are offered through AgriLife. This will include AgriLife Bookstore and AgriLife Learn course catalog products. We intended to create a seamless user experience that will allow us to showcase the breadth of content that AgriLife has to offer.

## GENERAL SERVICE UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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In the coming months, a primary focus for our COALS Instructional Design team will be targeted at continued support for departments and faculty through the Canvas migration.

We plan to pilot a captioning tool during the spring semester to assist with ADA compliance with a select group to determine if we will implement broadly to each department this fall. This initiative will be funded by the college.

We will continue to support Extension and Research efforts for product development as directed by leadership.

Individual communications have been distributed to unit leaders regarding transitions that are taking place with the AgriLife Bookstore. Please send all requests and other issues for yourselves and your customers through our customer service team. We will be using the AgiLoft ticketing system to manage and track our Bookstore-related tasks.

Customer Service information:

- Customer Service Phone: (979)803-1372
- Customer Service Email: [learnonline@aq.tamu.edu](mailto:learnonline@aq.tamu.edu)

## Events

### SPRING EVENT GUIDANCE

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While we are anxious to resume face to face gatherings as soon as it is deemed safe and reasonable to do so, we are using local, University and System guidance regarding the viability of said events during the spring semester. Once guidance is confirmed, we will be distributing an update with information to help guide unit decisions on spring/summer offerings. If there are any questions regarding events, policy interpretation and recommendations, please contact [rebecca.oneal@aq.tamu.edu](mailto:rebecca.oneal@aq.tamu.edu)

### VENUES

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Our venues (Shirley & Joe Swinbank '74 AgriLife Center and The Gardens at Texas A&M University) are open to accepting reservations, but with limited capacity. 6' physical distancing, masks and other COVID-19 mitigation efforts are enforced for all bookings.

### REGISTRATION

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A survey was sent to all AgriLife employees to gauge how our current registration system (formerly know as Conference Services) was being used. The survey was crafted to better identify user needs and identify areas in which we could provide services to best address these needs. Over 200 responses have provided rich data from current and prospective users on what services they are currently using, what would be most helpful in a future system and what registration platform features are a priority in their program planning.

An RFP has been distributed to help identify a new event registration system. Proposals will be vetted this spring with an implementation timeline forthcoming. The team continues to process requests for registration sites, and a transition plan will be implemented to ensure the seamless transition from one system to another. Additional information and timing will be shared as it is available.