



Rutgers Business School-Newark (RBS) has demonstrated a commitment to fiscally responsible spending habits by creating the RBS Discretionary Spending Approval Request Form. The form requires the signature of the department chair and/or Dean's Office before a requisition is approved in RU Marketplace or an expense report is submitted. All requests for computer equipment must be verified by the Office of Technology and Instructional Service to determine if existing equipment warrants replacement.

The Resource Optimization Committee consists of RBS staff at all levels and from various departments. The committee's charge is to create cross-departmental efficiencies and/or savings and ask questions such as: *What cost-competitive quality vendors we should consider? Are there technologies with demonstrable cost savings that we can adopt? Are there activities that we can bring in-house and handle effectively? Where might we rethink our assumptions and spending?*

The Deans' Office shares information with staff via weekly virtual meetings, Microsoft Teams and bi-monthly newsletters. We gained staff and faculty support by creating a culture of collective responsibility where everyone agrees they have an important role to play and are committed to the charge put in place by university administrators. While no one loves the increased paperwork and the additional justifications needed, everyone understands the need to do so and have been very cooperative.

We are currently working to identify shared services within RBS departments and with other RU units to negotiate better pricing and/or allocate shared costs for existing services appropriately. For example, the Finance and Economics department data subscription purchases might be used by other departments. The full impact will likely not be determined until FY2022.

Support for administrative staff is important. They are the frontline workers who engage suppliers, complete required paperwork, and process payments. Administrative staff need to know they will be supported when they ask: *Is it necessary? Is it appropriate? Is the cost reasonable?*

On a more personal note, employees could be facing other challenges (home schooling, loss of employment, childcare, family separation, caring for a sick friend or family member, mental health). It's important to have empathy and be supportive during these challenging times.

NICOLE MCCRAY

Business Manager
Rutgers Business School-Newark



Rutgers University Libraries are the official university buyer for all library collection materials. Over the past several years, we have undertaken many strategic initiatives to cut down our costs while maximizing our content. For example, a creative deal – \$1M one-time backfile purchase of content from Elsevier – reduced future inflation on an annual \$4M contract and secured significantly more content for our researchers.

We partner with several associations and departments across Rutgers on purchasing agreements and group buying. Recently, we partnered with the Office of Research and Economic Development on a contract with Ex Libris to combine our buying power and significantly reduce the cost of Esploro (a research information management system) and Pivot (a database of grant opportunities). We have had free access to Pivot since February 2020 while we work to implement and integrate Esploro.

When making these and other changes, staff were understanding. Being a cost pool with a limited budget sets the stage, but official documentation and policy reminders from University Procurement Services and the Controller's Office were helpful to enforce the seriousness of the situation. Transparency is always key, so we explain the benefit of changes and how they will increase buying power in other areas. Consistency is also important. We work hard to apply the rules and principles evenly and fairly across our units so folks know what to expect.

While it's difficult to say what cost savings measures we will take in the future, we are certain that more change and efficiencies are coming. COVID-19 has forever changed how we work. Any change, no matter how small you think it is, makes a difference. I have seen what appear to be the most basic changes in how we approach our buying or our operations make massive improvements, while also planting seeds for new ideas about further improvements. The possibilities are endless once you get set in the habit of viewing everything through a lens of process improvement. The excitement also becomes contagious as people see the benefits.

ABIGAIL DIPAOLO

Executive Director of Administration and Technology
Rutgers University Libraries



From the beginning of the pandemic and the ensuing budget shortfalls, Rutgers Global not only strictly followed the university guidelines by prudently monitoring all expenses, but also mobilized and repurposed all staff to support urgent and critical initiatives, such as [Rutgers Overseas Semester Experience \(ROSE\)](#) program and [Study Abroad @ Home](#).

Due to the pandemic, converting student programs from in-person into online also offered us a great cost-saving opportunity. Hosting the Fall Study Abroad Fair and New International Student Orientation virtually saved about \$12,000 and \$100,000 respectively.

Given that travels are still limited under the pandemic, we expect that most of the student programs will be offered virtually, which will save us a significant amount of programming costs. Also, professional development costs may be much lower than usual since most conferences are offered virtually.

Given the hiring freeze and budget cuts, Rutgers Global staff have adapted quickly to deliver quality services remotely. We communicate changes rapidly and transparently to get more buy-in from staff of all levels, but still find it challenging to creatively motivate staff and help maintain their wellbeing. It is vital to communicate the big picture to all staff so that the urgency and necessity of cost-saving becomes a shared responsibility across the unit to ensure the university can get through these unprecedented and challenging times.

B E N F A N

Director, Budgets and Personnel
Rutgers Global



A great benefit of working with student organizations is the ability to teach fiscal responsibility and good financial stewardship to an ever-revolving door of student government leaders. One method we routinely employ in Camden Student Affairs and pass on to our student government leaders is known as the "informal bid process."

When searching for providers of goods and services to support student programs and activities, our administrators and student leaders are asked to seek price quotes from at least three to five different providers that can deliver the same service. We often require that they select the vendor with the lowest price, unless quality and/or project timing are a consideration.

Since our students primarily focus on their studies while supplementing their academics through participation in student activities and programs, we realize that students planning far in advance is rare. Unfortunately, due to this culture, the student services environment is equipped to process purchases in an emergency manner. However, as we always train and explain to students each semester, the further we get out in front of a purchase, the better the planning for cost savings.

The greatest challenges with most business process changes are clear and concise communication of the new processes and obtaining the proper "buy-in" from all the relevant stakeholders in the process. When it is necessary to adjust a process, it's always most helpful when the stakeholders know and understand why the process has been altered. This allows us to fully comprehend the bottlenecks and problems inherent in the old process that should lead to the benefits and efficiencies gained with the new process. This helps lead to improved compliance when introducing a new process or policy.

Another challenge we've seen is that many university managers and administrators are not familiar with procurement and finance jargon. We make sure to spell out accounting and procurement language in plain terms, and provide real life examples of situations and analogies that make the jargon palatable to the non-financial community.

T O M S N Y D E R

Business Manager

Division of Student Affairs - Camden Campus



During the summer, External Affairs implemented a new step in the purchasing process that would not significantly impact the time-to-purchase. Staff are now expected to provide a brief justification for their purchases, in addition to the required supporting documents, to determine whether the purchase was necessary and reasonable to support the department's core mission and operations; and whether the purchase is being procured at the lowest cost. The justifications must receive approval from our division leaders, so their support is critical.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the number of cost saving changes External Affairs has and will make in the coming months, the commitment shown by the department as a whole has resulted in existing agreements for core goods and services being negotiated or re-negotiated as the case dictates. This has helped us fine tune our needs and redirect resources that maximize the benefit to the university. This has also helped our department weather the more recent budget cuts.

There are always challenges when implementing process changes. However, in many cases, those challenges can be overcome to a certain extent by providing staff with the context necessary to support the changes. The purchasing process and requirements at Rutgers are complex and adding any additional steps at a time when changes are a regular occurrence are difficult. However, I periodically meet with all department preparer's to review important changes and updates, which has helped to provide them with context and specific details regarding the changes. In addition, I have planned to conduct virtual sessions for our staff to ensure they are aware of the changes and how it affects their role in the purchasing process.

My advice for other units is that training on the local level is important. Identifying key stakeholder groups and delivering them the information they need is important. While it's difficult to find time to train key personnel, especially if different groups have different needs, it's important to make sure all stakeholders have the information and context they need to avoid frustration and limit issues and mistakes.

TODD SLAWSKY

Business Manager
University Communications and Marketing



The COVID-19 pandemic forced us not only to think more carefully about how we spend our limited resources to keep the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) running in support of our educational and research mission, but also how we actually perform our duties day-to-day. With regard to how we do our work, the pandemic has afforded us the opportunity to break our reliance on paper in ways that all the previous cost-containment initiatives and pushes for increased sustainability haven't. Most of us are not back on campus yet and, unless we have printers of our own at home, we've had to learn to do without. I, for one, had a pretty significant paper habit and was very set in my ways. It took me awhile to get used to working exclusively with electronic documents, but if this old dog can do it, so can everyone else.

Thus an obvious target of cost savings was our lease on the majority of the 95 copiers we have across SAS was coming to an end. The data from recent months shows a significant decrease in the number of copies we are making – even with our return to research activities on the rise – and we have developed a plan to replace nearly all of these copiers with small, multi-function, networked printers for the short-term, and only lease new copiers after we analyze the need upon a full return to campus. We estimate the cost savings when we make the change in the coming weeks to be at least \$20,000 a month and we are aiming to eventually replace significantly fewer copiers than we had – and downsize the units we put back in most cases as well.

It wasn't a hard sell for this phase as few areas are using their copiers much, and the hope is that by offering more cost-effective and eco-friendly options in the months ahead we can reduce the overall expenditure on copiers (and also toner and paper) as well as our carbon footprint.

M A R I A A N D E R S O N

Vice Dean for Administration
School of Arts and Sciences