2016 Pulse Study:
Higher Ed IT Maturity

From expanding service management across campus to creating transparency within the entire project portfolio – how do you rank?

TeamDynamix

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Pulse Study Overview

In an effort to understand the emerging challenges facing Higher Ed IT, TeamDynamix has conducted a pulse study to evaluate IT organizational maturity. The study included 104 participants from two- and four- year institutions ranging in size from under 5,000 undergraduates to more than 100,000. The purpose of the study is to understand in the specific requirements and obstacles facing the unique segment of Higher Ed IT.

The study looks at the responses against a maturity model based on a five-level system:

Level 1   Ad-hoc / Manual: No system or process in place to manage service requests or projects. In this environment, the organization is operating purely via emails and manual processes.

Level 2   Some Process / Systems: There are some processes in place, including systems for intake and tracking, but they are not well defined. Workflows are often absent and expectations for service levels are usually unmanageable.

Level 3   Defined System / Approach: In this environment, there is a defined and articulated process and system to support the process. Any deviations from the process are detected. Workflow is embedded into the system and there is some level of control is in place.

Level 4   Managed / Repeatable: This is a highly evolved organization with a defined system, embedded workflow, exception processing, and a level of oversite that allows for the creation of service-level agreements. Expectations are closely managed and there is the ability to manage resources and workloads in real-time.

Level 5   Calibrated & Optimized: The entire system is optimized. Process and workflow can be iterated to accommodate shifts in demand, resources, and service delivery. There is an iterative feedback loop that allows for the entire organization to adjust in an effort to provide optimal service.

This study looks at top challenges in the Higher Ed environment combined with a self-ranking of various functions against this maturity model.

Key Findings

46% of study participants state that lack of resources tops the list of key challenges for 2016-2017.

There is no doubt about it–Higher Ed IT professionals are strained and the pressure continues to mount. With thousands of new users (students, faculty, and staff), devices (from mobile to desktop computers to gaming systems), and requests (from minor password requests to major project requests), managing resources in this environment can be daunting—and communicating the efforts to stakeholders is even more difficult.

In order to optimize resources, there needs to be a systematic process and workflow in place. In addition, to save precious resource time, non-value added tasks—like manual processing, ad-hoc reporting requests, gaps in hand-offs, and poorly defined workflows—need to be identified and removed.

24% identify an inability to communicate the value of IT as the top challenge for 2016-2017.

While the study illuminates a close association between the IT department and the strategic vision of the institution, IT remains unable effectively communicate its value to both stakeholders and the campus at-large. This pain is seen across both service management and project portfolio management. Key factors include a need for better performance tracking, reporting and dashboards, as well as collaboration tools.

42% state that lack of process and controls prohibits the institution from moving up the maturity model due to manual processing and workflow gaps.
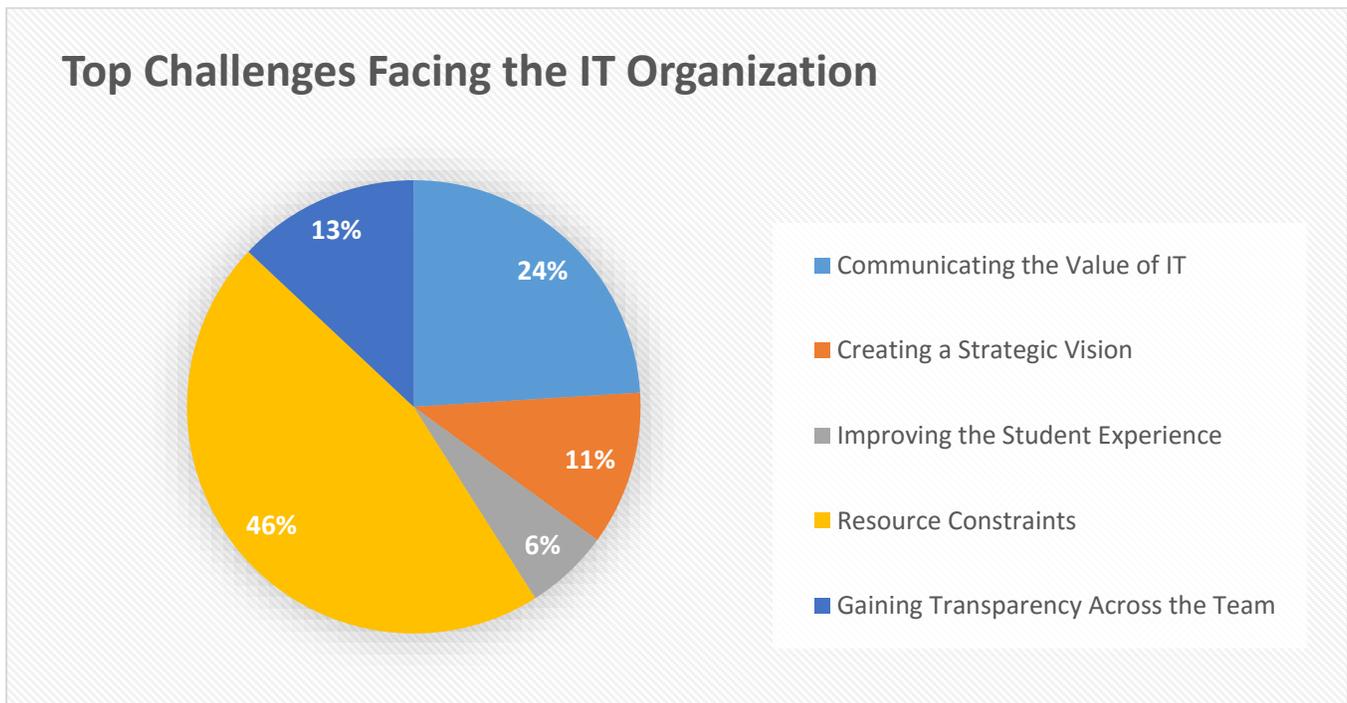
Resource constraints and an inability to demonstrate the value of IT are the effect of not having a clearly defined process—especially one embedded in a technology platform with workflow and tracking. If this is not being done, there is no way to accurately know where resource time is going and if you have the right talent on the team. Getting from Level 1 or 2 to Levels 3 and 4 can be achieved by addressing these issues.

55% can only satisfy 10% of requests via a self-service portal.

Self-service portals with integrated service catalogs and a knowledge base can help with these two top challenges: 1) resource constraints and 2) an inability to demonstrate the value of IT. These types of advancements can transform not only how the IT organization operates internally but also how they interact with the broader campus community.

Resource Constraints – old issue, new solutions?

Higher Ed IT professionals are often faced with unique challenges. Each year hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of new users flood the campus, each toting an average of three devices (according to a recent EDUCAUSE study). Embarking on a challenging, and yet rewarding, educational experience can be daunting and exciting all at once. The ability for the IT organization to effectively support this unique user base is instrumental to the overall brand reputation and rankings of the institution.

Top Challenges Facing the IT Organization

- 24% Communicating the Value of IT
- 11% Creating a Strategic Vision
- 6% Improving the Student Experience
- 46% Resource Constraints
- 13% Gaining Transparency Across the Team

Lack of resources tops the list of challenges at 46% followed by an inability to effectively communicate the value of IT at 24%.

Lack of resources tops many lists—especially when talking to IT management—however, it is important to take a look at that response from a distance. Lack of resources often means people e.g. "We simply do not have enough staff to do our jobs right." Although this is a roadblock for many IT departments, adding headcount is a daunting and drawn-out process. So what can be done to remove this roadblock? Here are some options and opportunities:

1. To justify additional headcount, the IT department needs data—and without a systematic approach and tracking mechanisms you simply cannot get the right data.
2. However, simply adding resources (without a strategy) does not fix the problem and, in some cases, can actually create more issues. A poorly managed process with inexperienced new staff members can create churn and increased scrutiny of the IT department.

So what can one do? The bigger questions are how do we (a) optimize the resources we have and then (b) track performance and output to justify additional headcount (if required). Of note, is that many resources span both the service desk & projects – having a single view to resource allocation can become a critical point in being able to accurately run these analytics.

Self-Ranking of IT Organization

Study participants were asked to rank themselves on a maturity scale ranging from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). Each level represents a distinct level of maturity as referenced in the Pulse Study Overview section. Level 1 equates essentially to an ad-hoc, chaotic, poorly defined process while Level 5 is a fully optimized process with iterative calibration and feedback.

Most organizations would consider achievement to Level 3 as "what good looks like"; there are repeatable processes in place and the processes are being measured and tracked. There is enough data to make adjustments and the right platform to go even further to levels 4 and 5.

Capabilities of IT Organization - Self Rankings	L 1	L 2	L 3	L 4	L 5
Onboarding New Students	11%	34%	27%	21%	7%
Response Time	17%	41%	21%	17%	4%
Managing Campus Wide Projects	19%	47%	15%	16%	4%
Self-Service Capabilities	17%	44%	21%	13%	5%
Student Experience	19%	29%	40%	10%	2%
Change Management	19%	43%	27%	10%	1%
Ability to Roll Out Non-IT Services	38%	39%	15%	6%	1%
Alignment of IT with Overall Strategy	9%	31%	34%	17%	10%
Integration of IT Service & Project Portfolio Management	32%	37%	12%	11%	9%
Formulated IT Vision	14%	38%	23%	19%	6%
SLAs are in Place	46%	30%	18%	5%	1%

On average, across all categories, 59% of the participants self-rank to Levels 1 or 2.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Ad-hoc / Discord	Some Order	Defined Process	Repeatable	Optimized
• Ad-hoc Work • Transactional • Often Manual • No Process	• Some Process • Not Tracked • Poor Auditing • Email Heavy	• Defined System • Resource Tracking • Auditing • Workflow Defined	• Workflow Embedded • Resource Optimization • Exception Processing	• Calibrated • Ability to Adjust • Campus Wide Transparency • Service Level Agreements

Each level contemplates that all previous levels are achieved.
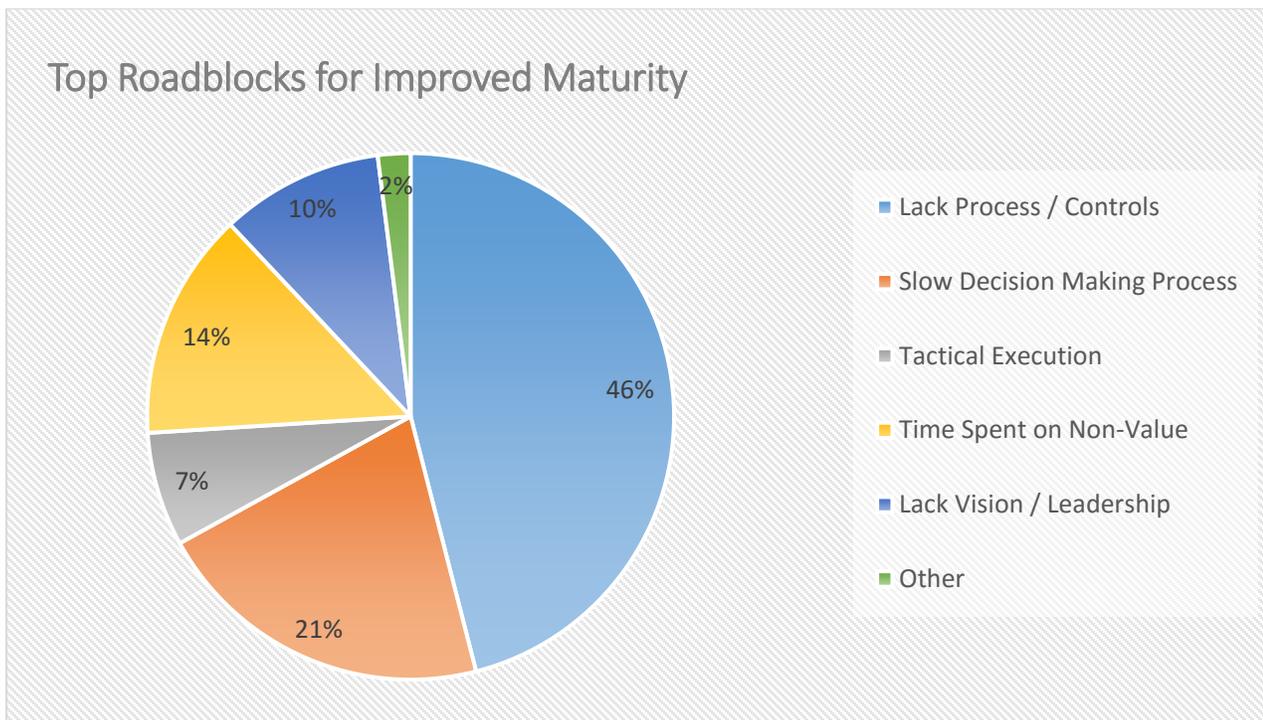
Top Roadblock to Improved Maturity: Lack of Process & Controls

When contemplating the maturity model, study participants were asked what was keeping them from moving up the scale. The number one issue—identified by 46% of the participants—was "Lack of Process, Control, or Standards."

It is interesting to pair this with the top challenge: ***lack of resources***. If we were to contemplate that a lack of resources would be perpetually in the way of progress—and we also assume that getting increased headcount usually a viable resolution —then we are essentially saying that the status quo would remain.

However, for those moving up the maturity scale – it is important to note, that they are thinking differently. We can look at this problem with a fresh view and new ideas of how to address these issues. What if the lack of process, control, and standards was contributing to our inability to perform?

What if we added more people but did not change this very real issue – would we move up the maturity model? Organizations cannot move up the maturity model without a highly defined process that is embedded into an automated system with controls, workflow, tracking and exception processing.
This is an essential component as is having the right tools and technology in place. From automated routing to remote access to resource optimization.

Lack of Process & Controls tops the list of roadblocks preventing improved maturity across the IT organization at 46% while slow decision making is 21%.

Self-Service Portals: Build it and will they will come?

Remarkably – 55% of the study respondents state that less than 10% of service requests can be fulfilled via a self-service portal. That is alarming – especially if we pair that result with the fact that the number one challenge is lack of resources. Only 11% are reporting a fulfillment rate of 50% or greater.

What % of Requests are Fulfilled via Self-Service?

Legend	
■	10-20%
■	20-50%
■	50-80%
■	80-100%
■	Less than 10%

22%
12%
10%
1%
55%
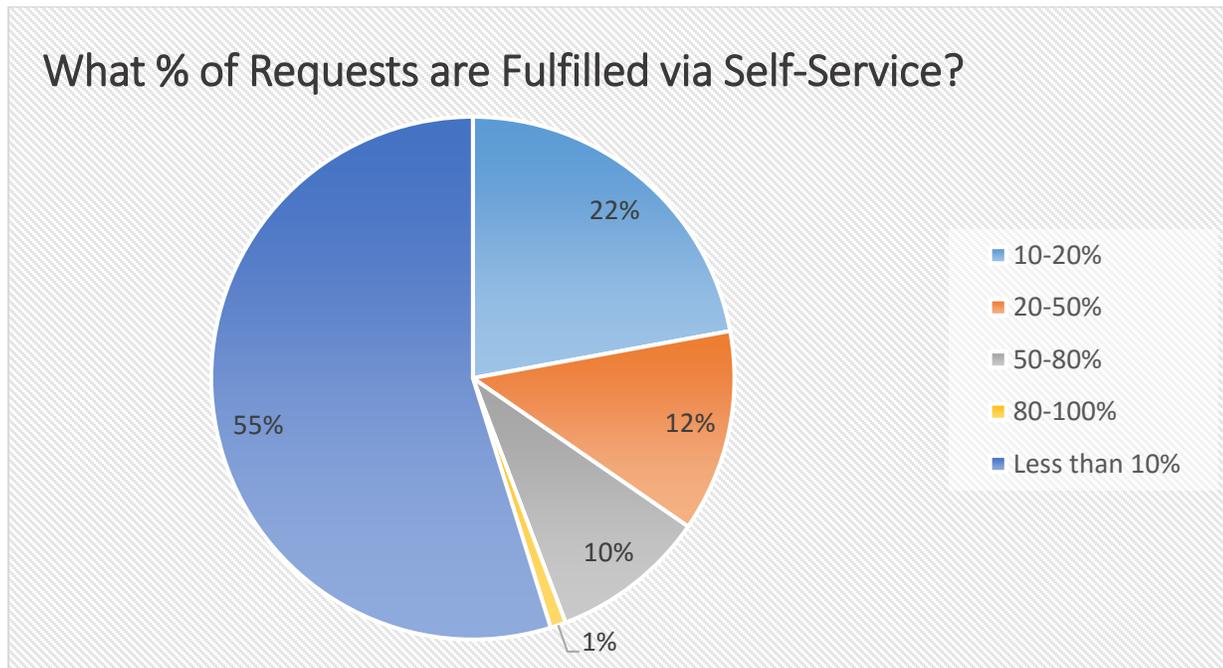
Only 11% of the study participants are reporting a self-service fulfillment rate of 50% or higher. 55% are fulfilling under 10% via self-service.

Supporting and enhancing the 'student experience' throughout the student lifecycle (from first contact through to becoming an alumni) is critical to the success in higher education today for both the student and the institution.

The student experience encompasses all aspects of student life (i.e. academic, social, welfare and support) with the academic imperative at the heart of it. In recent years, undergraduate research and initiatives looking at the student experience have tended to focus on the 'first year' undergraduate experience. However, when it comes to service management, the span is years - developing a relationship that is bidirectional and productive is critical.

An online portal for the students can evolve far beyond the basic IT services. It is possible to build out basic workflows for every single interaction point – all from one central location.

Imagine a hub where a student can access:

Service catalogs and online request forms: Clients can fill out simple, online forms--and on the backend, workflows insure that the requests are fulfilled simply and efficiently.

Knowledge bases: Clients can answer their own questions through a repository of shared knowledge in the knowledge base. Forums: If they're unable to find needed information in the knowledge base or service catalog, they can ask the community for help by submitting questions through a forum system. Widgets on the home page: Have frequently asked questions (for example, the IT department's hours and location)?

Put helpful content, like system status, alerts, hours, location, popular knowledge base articles, or even the latest news on the portal homepage.

Of course, that's just a sampling of what a great client portal can do. See some real, live, higher ed client portals in action by checking out the following sites:

- Florida Atlantic University
- Manhattan College
- University of Wisconsin River Falls
- Stevens Institute of Technology
- University of Dayton
- Barry University
- West Virginia University

The Service Catalog is the primary interface between the customer and the service provider and as such it can be extremely challenging to create one that is effective. Explaining technical services to a non-technical population can be as difficult as translating information from one language to another. So, how can you help students, faculty, and staff find what they need in the service catalog? Here are two simple ways:

1: Use plain language

One way to optimize your service catalog is by using plain and clear language. The need for clear language is magnified by the fact that most people accessing your Service Catalog are probably experiencing an already elevated level of anxiety. The Service Catalog should immediately afford a sense of comfort, not add to that anxiety with technical jargon or strings of letters with no meaning outside of the programmer's lounge.

2: Draw a map

As previously mentioned, when someone visits the service catalog, they are already anxious. The service catalog should immediately point customers in the right direction, guiding them down the correct path as they look for what they need.

How do we accomplish these two tasks? Consider these best practices:

- Use plain language throughout your service catalog.
- Use a "short description" to augment understanding of what each service or service category offers.
- Keep the number of services displayed at once manageable, customers shouldn't have to scroll to see their first "click."
- Avoid technical terms unless and until they are necessary (usually within a sub-category).
- Test the language and navigation with actual students and faculty members
- Leverage a usage analysis tool (like Google Analytics) to determine where students run into dead ends in the client portal to then make improvements

508 Compliance

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 11% of undergraduates have a disability. Section 508 guidelines help universities to understand how to best service this population. As part of that framework, there are minimum standards put forth for web accessibility.

The student experience can be significantly improved through the use of student portals – which means that the portal should be 508 compliant in order to best service the entire population. This means that students should equally be able to access things like admissions information, facilities service requests, IT support tools and infrastructure.

Your school's website is important – it is your face to the world – to the students, their parents, to the faculty and staff. In fact, 19% of the American population is on record with a disability according to the US Census bureau – which means that when servicing the broader population 508 compliance becomes an even bigger topic to contemplate.

Project Portfolio Management – an Integrated Approach

The accelerated pace of change across Higher Education combined with increased enrollment and growing resource constraints is creating a perfect storm that is forcing schools to think differently.

How do you help the organization transition from just executing projects to delivering the right solutions to achieving strategic goals? It's clear: you help the university fulfill its mission of applying outstanding and consistent governance, alignment, and communication techniques to a university project portfolio.

Historically there has been very little transparency across departments which in turn can contribute to dysfunction specifically around resource allocation and technology needs.
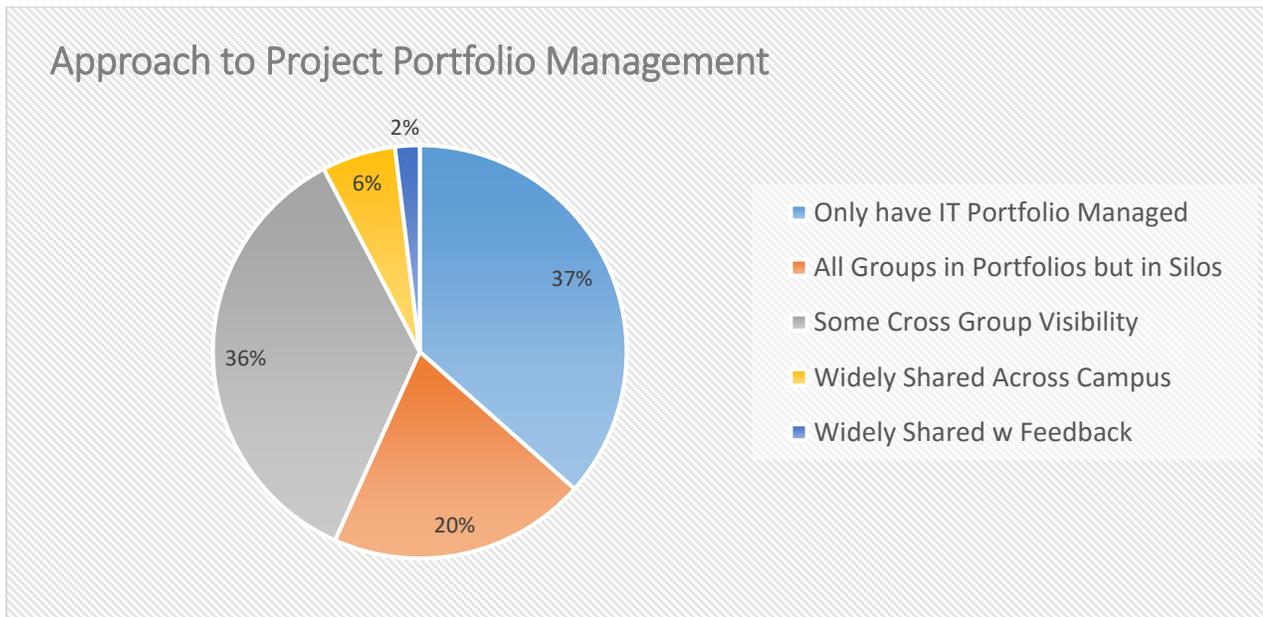
When it comes to project management, there is far more progression on campus as compared to service management and delivery. In fact, 37% report that there is a centralized view of all IT projects on campus and that within each functional area 20% of the groups can view all projects – although this is done in silos.

This area is less problematic because it historically involves less individuals however, when looking at how well integrated the ITSM & PPM platform is, 69% of the responses show a very low level of maturity.

Self-Ranking	L 1	L 2	L 3	L 4	L 5
Integration of IT Service & Project Portfolio Management	**32%**	**37%**	12%	11%	9%

69% of the study participants are self-ranking on the lower levels for having an integrated view of service & project portfolio management. The natural outcome of not having an integrated view is that it is much more difficult to manage resources and therefore almost impossible to perform an accurate analysis on performance and output across the team. With resource constraints at the top of the "challenges" list this is an area to address.

Use Portfolio Management to Help Manage Risks to Your Projects' Resources

In most reasonably complex institutions, you probably cannot effectively deliver projects without also having effective project portfolio management in place. Most project managers and their traditional proven project management methods and tools focus on managing projects to successful linear conclusions. Unfortunately, too often the "iceberg dead ahead" that ultimately sinks their well-scheduled "project-ship" is actually another project from within his/her own organization, that the project manager cannot see coming.

All projects move forward by consuming institutional resources to produce results. Projects' human, financial, technological, logistical, and even sponsorship resources are the fuel that propel projects successfully over the finish line.

However, it's an organizational reality that each and every day any of the critical resources that are committed to making one project successful, can suddenly be diverted to meet the unexpected urgent needs of another new and/or existing organization project.

Significant on-going risks to your projects key resources usually present the greatest overall threat to your project's ultimate success. Resource capacity planning can be a very effective tool to help you navigate these challenging waters.

Impact of IT on the Institution Brand

According to the 2015 Survey of Admissions Directors, half of admissions directors were very concerned about meeting their enrollment goals for the 2015-16 academic year, and 58 percent did not meet their goals. Naturally this trend initiates discussion and debate.

Where are the students going? What is driving them?

With any challenge today, technology often emerges – is it the answer? Or is it the changing target market – or is it the costs and the rising issues around student debt? In either direction we can be of one certainty – there is a change. And with change comes evolution. If you are part of an IT organization for Higher Ed you are no doubt feeling the pressure.

How will you evolve to meet these emerging challenges? What will you do to help align with the school's strategic goals – whether that manifests as self-service, increased breadth of services, student experience, response times – you will be asked to jump higher – taking a hard look at where you fall when it comes to maturity of your IT organization is a good start. Are you reactive? Do you have a systematic process? Are you optimized? Are your resources appropriately deployed?

All of these factors contribute to the overall student experience, and ultimately the brand and reputation of the organization. What steps are you taking to move your organization further?

Pulling Service Management Excellence out of the Chaos

It's an old story – resource constraints, a never ending stream of new users, an increasing demand for more, faster and better – can the Higher Ed IT professional get ahead? Can the value that IT is bringing be effectively communicated?

The good news is that the answer is yes to both.

However, what many may not understand is that the answer does not rest in 'more resources' – at least not necessarily in the traditional sense of more FTEs. While there is no doubt that understaffed organizations exist, it is often not the only issue.

What happens is that without a systematic approach, a repeatable process and defined workflows, work often finds its way to whomever. Priorities are not defined and the madness begins. This is why it is so important for organizations to take a step back – and ask – what are we doing?

Taking the time to invest in creating the right processes and workflow may seem daunting – but it is truly the only way out. What is new however is that many ITSM solutions now offer much more than just a ticketing system – think about service management as a true platform and service.
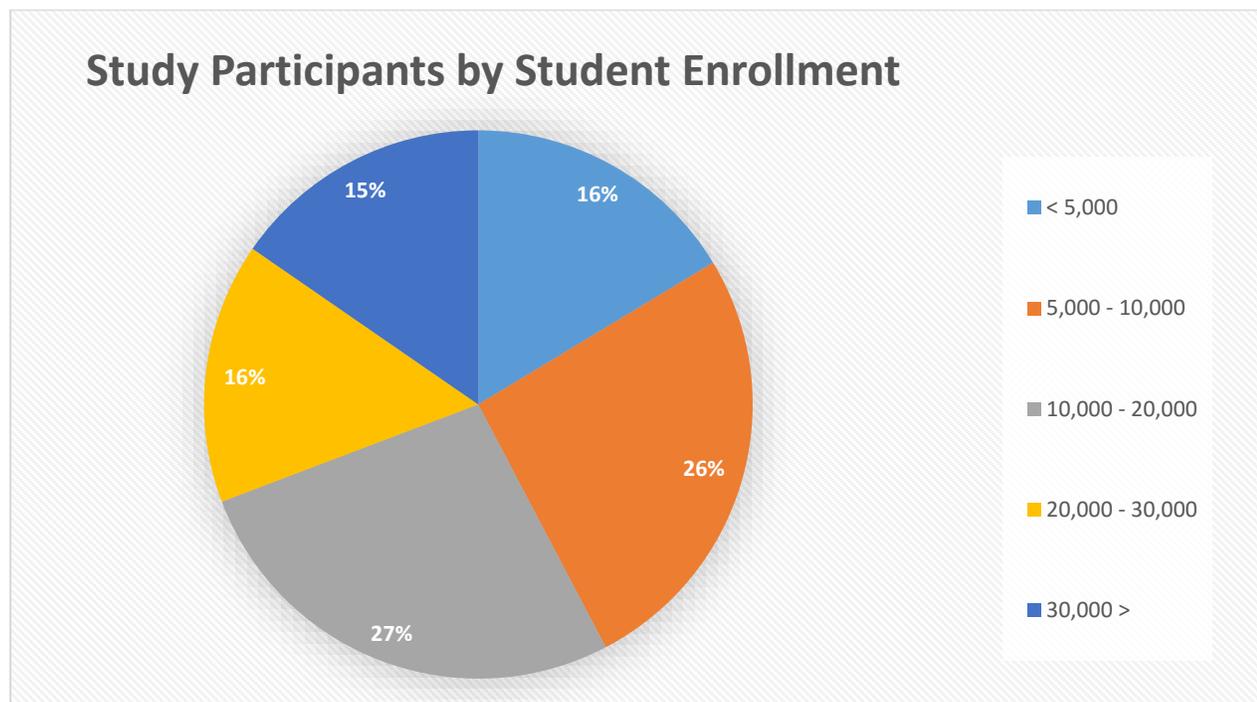
Consider that you invest in a service management platform that comes pre-configured with service catalogs, a knowledge base, a student portal and an integrated project management solution – what that means is that you have a starting point. _This makes the rest a reality_.

Internal Discussion Points:

Where are you in the service management maturity model?

If you feel buried in ad-hoc work, chaotic priority management and therefore cannot articulate the value your team brings – you are probably ready to take a break and to look at alternatives – it could be the case of the shoemaker's children – do you have the right platform and infrastructure to move your organization forward? That is the first step in migration from Level 1 or 2 to a more systemic Level 3.

Study Scope

Study Participants by Student Enrollment

- 16% — < 5,000
- 26% — 5,000 - 10,000
- 27% — 10,000 - 20,000
- 16% — 20,000 - 30,000
- 15% — 30,000 >

The study includes 104 participants across the United States and Canada. The participants ranged across both 2 and 4 year schools with a broad range in enrollment size.

The study was conducted in March, 2016 by TeamDynamix.