University of Washington
Human Resources/Payroll Modernization Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the HR/Payroll Modernization Program?

The Human Resources/Payroll Modernization program is a major, multi-year initiative to replace the University of Washington's 34-year old legacy payroll system with a modern, integrated system to manage human resources and payroll functions. It is the largest administrative transformation effort ever undertaken by the University and is essential to supporting our large and diverse workforce. In February, 2014, the program was approved by the UW Board of Regents, and Workday was chosen as the system vendor. The program was launched in May 2014.

This replacement effort is necessary because the University’s current legacy payroll system is becoming increasingly difficult to support and is not keeping pace with the institution’s business needs. The current payroll system dates back to 1982, when the University’s operating environment was substantially less complex than it is today. The new system will significantly improve critical HR and payroll operations, strengthen compliance, reduce risk, provide better data for decision making, and result in better service across the University.

When will the program be completed?

On May 12, 2016 the University’s Board of Regents approved an extension of go-live for the new Workday system to summer 2017, and an additional budget amount of $7.8 million to support this work into 2017. This one-time funding will be split between Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, and will use central temporary resources, which comes from a reallocation of existing dollars for administration. There will be no additional request for state funding, tuition revenue, additional debt capacity, or student fees, nor will this additional cost be passed along to Academic units.

This extension allows the University additional time to thoroughly review, validate and test the system design, and engage the UW community in preparing for the new system and business process changes. The program now plans to go-live in summer 2017.

What is Workday?

Workday is a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution for Human Resources and payroll services that is hosted in the cloud by the vendor, Workday Corporation. Under this approach, the system is regularly updated with improvements and new services. Workday is being implemented by many other higher education institutions, including University of Texas at Austin, Penn State, LSU, USC, Yale University, and New York University. For more information, visit www.workday.com.

What caused the delays in implementing Workday at UW?

The program to replace the UW’s 34-year old legacy payroll system with Workday is more than a technical implementation; it is a large-scale business transformation effort involving changes to business process that will impact more than 40,000 employees across three campuses and two medical centers. Making these changes has been significantly more complex than we initially anticipated.
During fall and winter, the University conducted extensive testing to evaluate how the new system would work across a spectrum of essential human resources and payroll functions, from start to finish. This testing uncovered significant gaps in system design and related business processes. With the extended timeline approved by the Board of Regents, the University now has the time needed to effectively address these gaps, thoroughly test the new system, and prepare the University community for the changes ahead.

How much will these delays cost and where will the funding come from?
The UW Board of Regents has approved an additional $7.8 million to support the program extension. This one-time funding will be split between Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, and will use central temporary resources, which comes from a reallocation of existing dollars for administration. There will be no additional request for state funding, tuition revenue, additional debt capacity, or student fees, nor will this additional cost be passed along to Academic units. The total cost of program implementation is about $76 million, including the additional funding for the extension.

How can you be sure the program will meet its new deadline?
With a new program plan, new leadership, an extended timeline and budget, and significant mitigating measures in place, the HR/P Modernization program now has the right structure, expertise, and approach to deliver a system that will meet the University’s business needs. In addition, the program has significantly increased its internal and external reviews, ensuring that any risks will be identified and mitigated. The program’s Executive Sponsors are committed to continually evaluating progress, providing careful oversight and accountability, and taking any necessary steps to ensure a successful launch of the new Workday system.

More Information
For more information, visit the HR/Payroll Modernization program website on the UW-IT collaborations page.