



Emory University School of Medicine Graduates from Time-Consuming Faculty Compensation Planning Processes



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Emorey University ranks among the top 20 research universities in the United States and has earned international recognition for its liberal arts colleges and graduate and professional schools. The Emory University School of Medicine spans more than 25 disciplines in basic and clinical science. Its 3,000 faculty members work in hospitals, clinics, classrooms, laboratories, and research centers, which greatly complicates compensation management for finance office staff.

Annual faculty compensation for the School of Medicine is challenging because employees serve academic, research, and clinical missions, often working across disciplines with labor allocations spanning 45 separate budgeting areas.

"These were challenging, laborious processes," said Alex Odom, Emory School of Medicine Compensation Consultant. "The major interest for us was improving process flows."

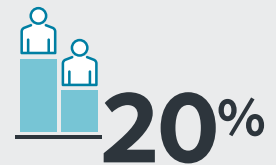
Emory School of Medicine's finance office improved process flows using Axiom™ Labor Planning, Budgeting and Forecasting, and Reporting and Analytics software to streamline processes and ensure appropriate leaders remained engaged in the process. Recently, the faculty compensation and fiscal affairs teams joined the effort and began using Axiom for their annual faculty compensation process.

Beth Boatwright, School of Medicine CFO, emphasized transformational improvements that "allowed for seamless real-time updates with department leadership and furthered the use of the Axiom tool beyond budgeting, forecasting, and reporting." Beyond that, she also noted that teams were excited to use a tool that they were familiar with and that allowed for a cohesive process for end users.

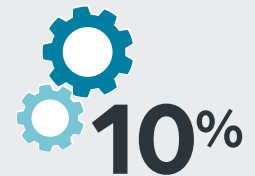
Data integration drives efficiency, accuracy

According to Odom, compiling data, creating reports, and managing approvals took an inordinate amount of time — approximately two to five hours to complete the data collection for a single workbook, of which there are about 45 each year.

"We pulled data from multiple sources and placed that data into a single workbook," Odom recalled. "We then had to use macros to shift the data to the proper place."



Labor savings



Increase in team efficiency



More accurate labor planning



He estimated that refining and distributing data to the proper departments and individuals took another 10 hours, plus up to 20 hours of additional back-and-forth to ensure the right information was in the right place. The process consumed more than 200 hours during the annual review period, which took up to seven weeks.

Time was not the only downside, however. Combining and processing the data required constant manual data revision, increasing the risk of human error and inaccuracies.

Axiom's data integration eliminated all that manual work by pulling data from the school's PeopleSoft human capital management (HCM) system. This dramatically improved the salary review process, as all relevant budget, salary, and expense data are accurate and visible in one place. Axiom also facilitates review processes with workflows that accelerate and streamline reviews across departments.

Visibility expedites review processes

Odom's office compiles workbooks to assist the Dean's office leadership in making salary decisions once per year.

"Before Axiom, we'd compose previous years' salary review workbooks in Excel, and we'd individually pull data in a line-by-line review of each faculty member's salary," Odom said. "We did that for approximately 3,000 faculty members."

They then used a content management platform as the mechanism for sharing comments or feedback from various departments. Users would take an Excel workbook, upload it, save their comments, and reload it to the platform. Imagine using this process across multiple iterations of each workbook for 45 different salary areas, and one begins to see the enormity of the task.

"It was all very manual from the process side before Axiom," Odom said. Axiom eliminated these manual processes and made it easier to monitor the review and approval process.

"Tracking activity and knowing when the books were modified are important," Odom said. "We leverage that a lot. If we are three weeks into the process and we see that 12 books haven't even been opened yet, it gives us the opportunity to say, 'Hey, you really need to get to work on this or you're going to miss X, Y, and Z deadline.'"

"Now, every time someone hits 'save,' it's reflected in our database. We're able to thoroughly track changes, which is much more difficult when you're using a manual process. Using Axiom, our margin for error has decreased while transparency and visibility into the proposals and approvals have increased significantly."

Accountability leads to results

The increased visibility and transparency have ultimately led to increased accountability. Since adopting Axiom, the salary review process has seen a 20% labor savings, a 10% increase in team efficiency, and a 15%–20% increase in the accuracy of tracking information.

"That has definitely been a win," Odom said. "The major interest for us was improving process flows, and Axiom has delivered."

To learn more about how Strata's Axiom software is assisting higher education institutions, please visit www.stratadecision.com.

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