PACE Summer Process Improvements

Amanda Chase

Cathy Krupp

University of Vermont

Overview & Objectives

Foundation: PACE serves as the central summer processor due to diffused staffing across units and the high-volume, short-format nature of summer courses.

Our goal: a seamless Summer '26 focused on exceptional student and faculty service, enabled by proactive timelines, clearer accountability, and earlier handling of time-sensitive items (e.g., new hire paperwork).

For today: Review what has changed since last summer: contracts, payroll, hiring readiness, timelines, tooling, and communications all designed to prevent unstaffed courses and late faculty pay, and improve student experience.

Structural Improvements to Reduce Errors

- **Unified Summer Playbook & Checklist: Unified Vision**
  Role-based tasks, cutoffs, and escalation paths so every course has a responsible point person.

- **Smartsheet as Operational Backbone: Better Living Through Technology**
  Automations replace manual merges; transparent formulas, and change logs reduce data errors.

- **Contracting: Fewer Steps, Better Tracking**
  Automated contract generation and Smartsheet tracking prevent lost contracts and speed confirmation to faculty, and signatures no longer required (just clicking approval box)

- **Hiring Readiness "Greenlight": No Course Left Unstaffed**
  Pre-checks (I-9, NetID, union status, pay rate) completed before start; clear "ready to work" indicators. Aslo, PACE will pilot WorkBright for remote I-9 verification to make hiring easier.

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Timelines, Accountability, and Communication

- **Standardized Timelines & Late-Staffing Rules**
  Firm deadlines for builds, hires, and payroll; backup chairs/directors assigned if staffing is late to avoid unstaffed courses.

- **Fewer Approval Gates & Clearer Ownership**
  Streamlined payment/contract approvals and unit visibility build trust and speed turnaround.

- **Unit Intelligence**
  Dashboards on builds, contracts, payroll readiness, and enrollments reduce one-off data requests.

- **Communication Cadence & Templates**
  Shared timelines, regular update emails, and scheduled touchpoints keep teams aligned and surface issues early.

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New Summer Timeline and Processes

- Unified Summer playbook + unified checklist by role and due dates

- Clear decision gates: course build/instructor assignment deadlines, hiring paperwork deadlines, and payroll cutoffs, all tied to preventing course disruptions

- Transparent escalation paths so issues are resolved before they affect students (who to contact, when)

Academic Unit & PACE Collaboration Playbook

Home › Playbook Launchpad › Academic Unit & PACE Collaboration Playbook

Summer Semester

This playbook provides academic units, departments, and Dean's offices with comprehensive guidance for planning and managing UVM's Summer Term (called Summer U for marketing purposes). It outlines policies, procedures, and best practices for course scheduling, budgeting, faculty hiring, and student support. The goal is to ensure a smooth, data-informed, and student-centered approach to summer operations that advances institutional priorities for enrollment growth, academic excellence, and financial sustainability. The Summer Term plays a critical role in UVM's academic and financial ecosystem. Our strategic priorities include:

1. **Expanding access and flexibility** for students seeking to accelerate degree completion or explore new academic areas.
2. **Optimizing enrollment and revenue** through data-informed scheduling and targeted program development.
3. **Supporting student success** by offering high-demand courses and ensuring continuity of academic progress.
4. **Encouraging innovation** in teaching modalities, including online, hybrid, and experiential learning.

Summer Playbook

Summer Checklist

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Contracting and Signature Process

- Automated contract creation with real-time tracking ensures faculty receive contracts early enough to plan and prepare.

- Transition to checkbox acknowledgement in Smartsheet reduces spam issues, lost contracts, and uncertainty about contract status (no more Adobe Sign).

- Eliminates outdated email/PDF steps that previously resulted in delayed signatures and delayed pay.

- On-load faculty members will receive a notification of summer course(s), no longer issued a contract.

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Payroll and Hiring Readiness

- Pre-verified hiring readiness 30 days before course start prevents late I-9 completions, delayed pay, and faculty being added to Banner after the course begins. Smartsheet-powered "ready to work" indicators and automated nudges to avoid late pay.

- "Ready to work" indicators and automated nudges reduce the need for manual monitoring.

- Standardized pay inputs + fewer approval gates = fewer payroll errors.

- All part-time hires receive PACE temp code to keep assignments active and ensure quick instructor listing in Banner.

- PACE to pilot WorkBright to verify remote I-9s.

- Requests to hire new faculty or support staff (not returning) must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the course start date; otherwise, responsibility for onboarding will shift to the academic unit.

- Instructors cannot begin work without a completed I-9.

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Data, Dashboards, and Reporting: Two-Year Plan

- Automations eliminate manual merges that introduced the possibility of error and delayed updates for instructors and students.

- Read-only BI views help units reduce ad-hoc requests and make data-informed staffing decisions.

- For summer 2027, operational dashboards will show real-time status of builds, contracts, payroll, and readiness. Early warning = fewer last-minute crises.

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Roles, Responsibilities, and Communication

- Defined "summer orchestrator" role and biweekly touchpoints to keep everyone aligned.

- Standard email templates, shared timelines, and one source of truth mean consistent information and prevent conflicting messages to faculty.

- Clear boundaries for late staffing to ensure every course has someone available to welcome students, even if hiring is delayed.

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What We Need from Deans

- Name a **unit point person** for summer contracts/payroll to streamline communications.

- Emphasize **Summer as a critical term** for new, current, and pre-matriculation learners: Summer is often their first UVM experience, and we must ensure the same level of rigor and quality as the academic year.

- **Align on timelines/cutoffs** to avoid unstaffed courses, late pay, and student confusion. Handle escalations to Deans offices quickly.

- **Reinforce faculty compliance related to HR and payroll requirements** (I-9s, NetID, contract acknowledgement, Protection of Minors training, as applicable) as student- and faculty-service necessities, not bureaucratic hurdles.

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Questions

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