

# **ATHLETIC CERTIFICATION PROCESS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**





# AGENDA

1. Background
2. Discovery
3. Improvements
4. Key Results
5. Next Steps
6. Reflections



# **1. BACKGROUND**

2. Discovery

3. Improvements

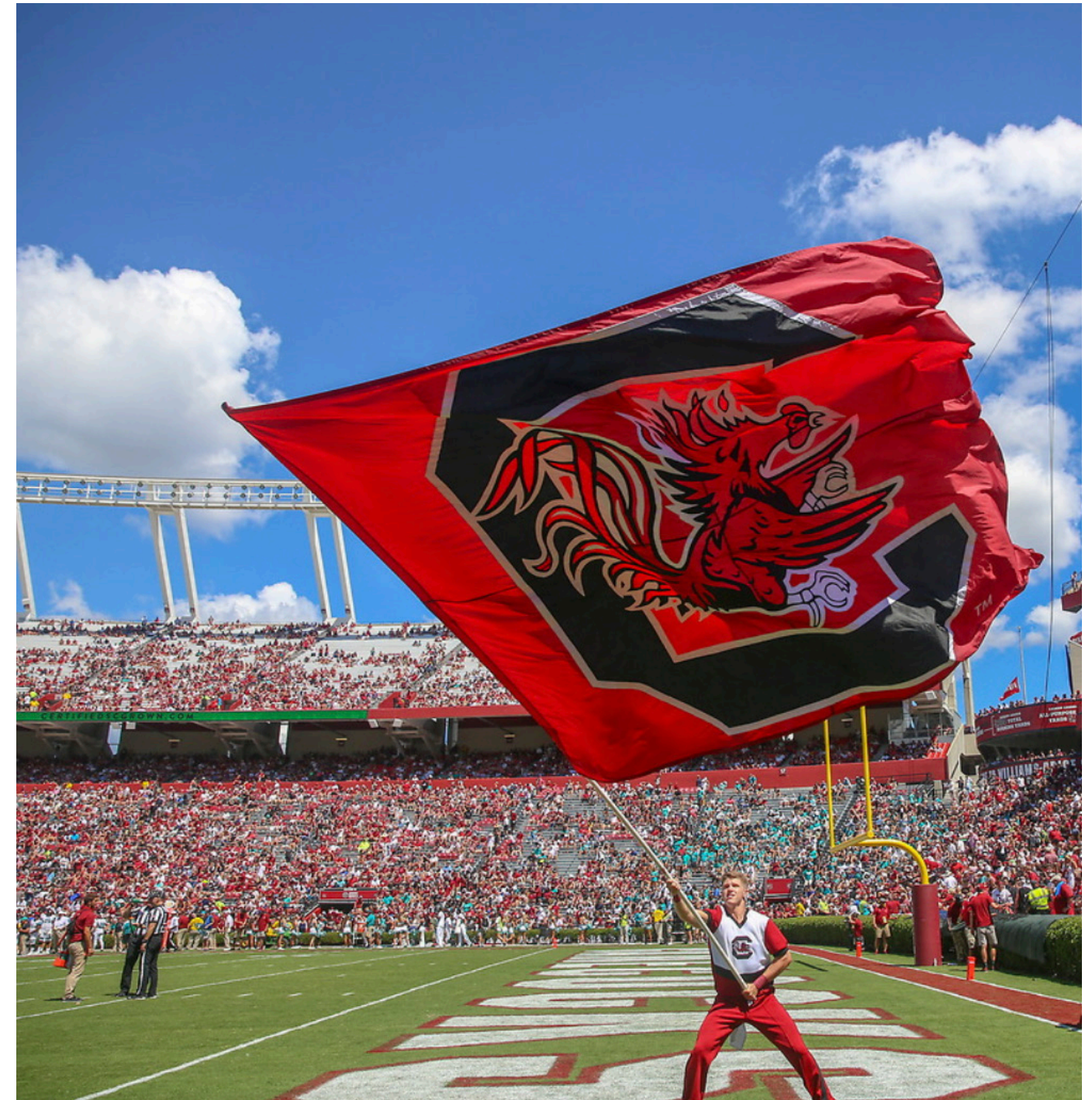
4. Key Results

5. Next Steps

6. Reflections

# WHY THIS PROJECT?

- Ensure student-athletes meet required academic eligibility standards
- Effectively support students on their academic path as they build their class schedules and stay on track to earn a degree
- Strengthen process efficiency and ease the workload for all involved
- Clarify roles and responsibilities



# WHO WAS INVOLVED?

**SPONSORS:** Aaron Marterer, University Registrar

Maria Hickman, Executive Associate Athletics Director

Lara Lomicka Anderson, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs  
and Dean of Undergraduate Studies

**TEAM:**

Maria Hickman, Executive Associate Athletics Director (Team Co-Lead)

BJ Beckham, Senior Associate Registrar for Educational Planning (Team Co-Lead)

Charlie Ball, Senior Associate Athletics Director for Academics

Justin Light, Director of Football Academics

Angie Ludwig, Associate Athletics Director for Eligibility & Enrollment Services

Kathy Smiling, Assistant Dean of Student Services, HRSM

# WHAT WE DID

## PHASE 1

### DISCOVERY

- Mapped the current process
- Gathered and reviewed data (e.g., length of time to receive completed cert forms)
- Identified delays, loopbacks, and other inefficiencies
- Gained insights into improvement opportunities

## PHASE 2

### POSSIBILITY

- Generated potential improvement actions
- Discussed possibilities and developed detail
- Reached consensus on a go-forward action set
- Developed map of the future-state process

## PHASE 3

### PLANNING

- Develop an action plan for implementation
- Document the improvement plan
- Plan a team presentation

**Next up:  
Implementation!**



1. Background

## **2. DISCOVERY**

3. Improvements

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```

graph LR
    subgraph Registrar's_Office [Registrar's Office]
        A[Pull DW report after last day to change/drop a course] --> B[Prep fillable forms; sort by college]
        B --> C[Email forms to cert officials]
        C --> D[When all forms arrive, sort for review]
        D --> E[Place on shared drive]
        E --> F[Review files listed for clarification]
        F --> G{Minor clerical errors or clarification needed?}
        G -- MCE --> H[Update form]
        G -- CN --> I[Send form(s) and questions to CCO]
        H --> J[Place in "amended" folder]
        J --> K[Update grid]
        I --> L[Review re-submitted form]
        L --> M{Ready or further clarification needed?}
        M -- Ready --> J
        M -- FCN --> N[Send form and questions to CCO]
        N --> O[Update cert form(s) and send back]
        O --> L
    end

    subgraph College_Certification_Officials [College Certification Officials]
        C --> P[Complete cert forms; return to Registrar's Office]
        P --> D
        O --> L
    end

    subgraph Dodie_Liaison [Dodie Liaison]
        E --> Q[Distribute forms to advisors; print copies for binders as required]
        Q --> R[Review forms; note issues in spreadsheet grid]
        R --> S[As needed, consult with advisors who identify issues to confirm]
        S --> T[Update and return grid with noted issues to RO; discuss as needed]
        T --> F
    end

    subgraph Advisors [Advisors]
        Q --> R
    end

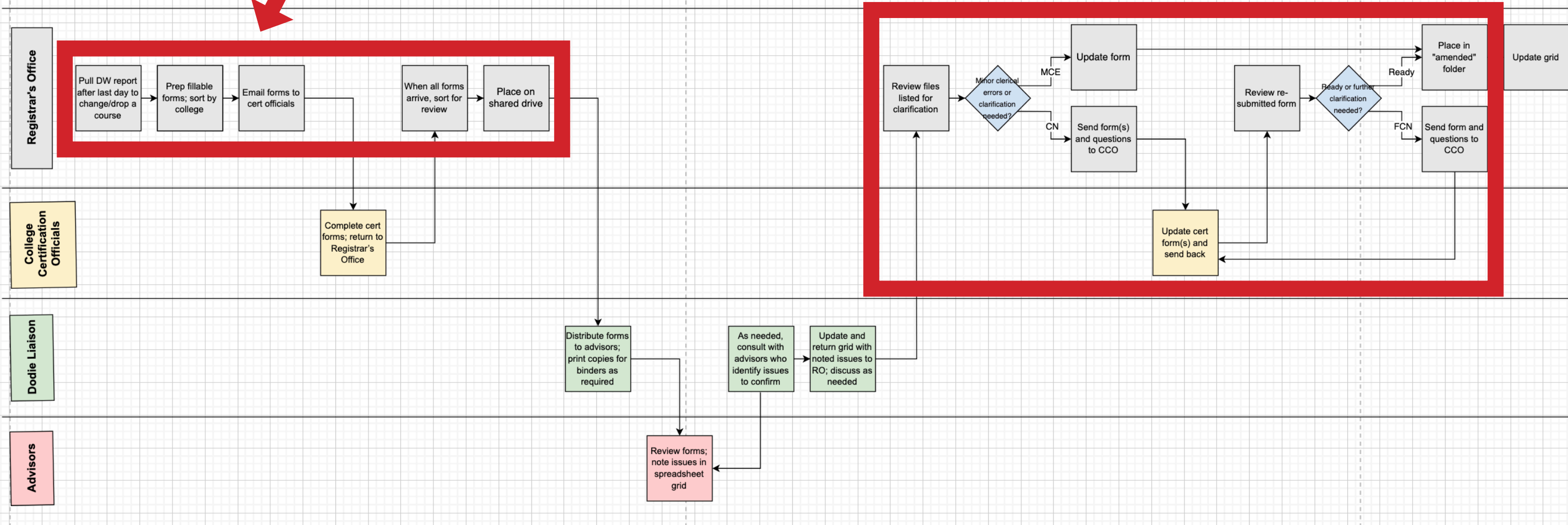
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Very manual  
and time-consuming

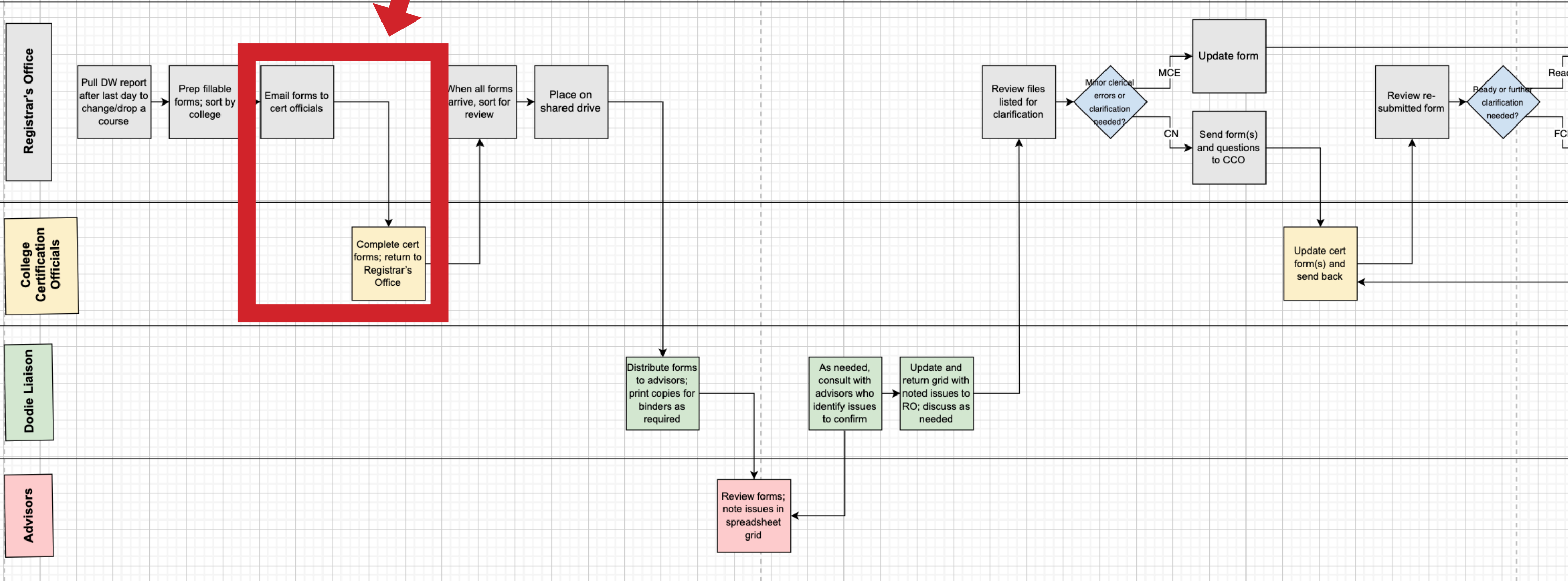
Time-consuming back and forth,  
delays, confusion

Current-state process

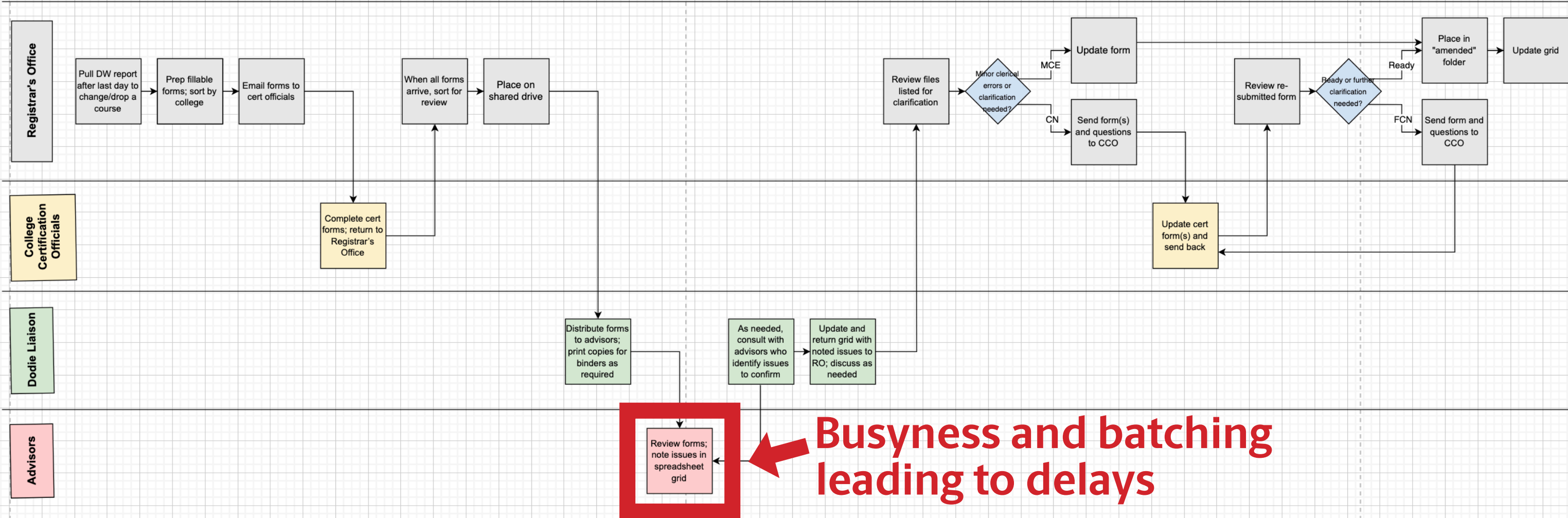


# Forms available to certifying officials approx 2 weeks after class start date

## Current-state process



## Current-state process





1. Background

2. Discovery

## **3. IMPROVEMENTS**

4. Key Results

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Process-related

Tech-related

Role-related

# IMPROVEMENTS

## Two-Tier Processing

Use a two-tier approach to process forms in two phases, with the ready ones going first

- Tier 1 – Student-athletes with schedules unlikely to change + early certs (approx. 60-70%)
- Tier 2 – Schedules still being worked on before or soon after class start date
- Dodie liaison will compile lists with input from student-athlete advisors – and send to Registrar

## PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Jumpstarts cert processing: 2-3 weeks sooner (fall semester) or 1-2 weeks sooner (spring)
- Gives certification officials and advisors a head start before their peak workload
- Allows for earlier action on schedules – protecting eligibility and better supporting students

# IMPROVEMENTS

## Dedicated Teams Channel

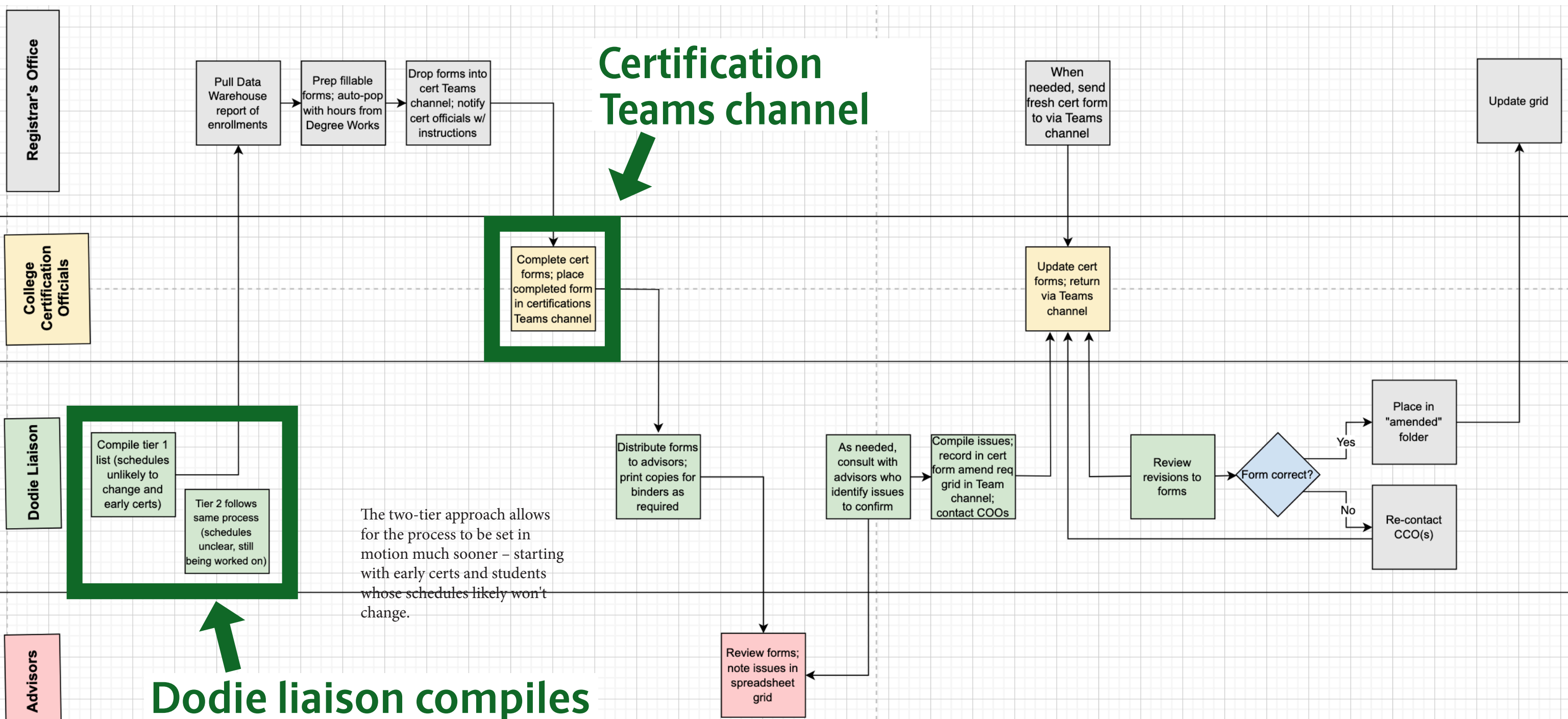
**Use the channel to manage cert forms, amendment requests, and tracking all in one place**

- Certification forms will be shared and returned directly through the channel
- The Dodie team will access completed forms immediately – no waiting for sorting or posting
- Amendment request document will also be stored and updated here

## PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Ends the back-and-forth of individual emails, reducing delays and keeping forms from getting lost
- Makes it easier and faster to see, track, and retrieve information
- Registrar's Office will save an estimated 40 hours per semester

# PROPOSED FUTURE-STATE PROCESS





# Fall Semester 2025

August 2025

| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Class  
start  
date

Last day to  
change/drop  
courses

September 2025

Tier 1 list  
compiled

Tier 1  
cert forms  
available to  
certifying  
officials

Tier 2 list  
compiled

Tier 2 forms  
available to  
cert officials

With the **current  
process**, forms  
would become  
available to  
certifying  
officials around  
Sept. 2, 2025

## Target timeline with the new process:

**Tier 1** certification forms would be available to certifying officials **3 full work weeks sooner**.

*Tier 1 includes student-athletes whose schedules are unlikely to change as well as early certifications.*

**Tier 2** certification forms would be available **1 full work week sooner**.

*Tier 2 includes student-athletes whose schedules are still being worked on before or soon after the class start date.*

# Spring Semester 2026

December 2025

January 2026

| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |

Class  
start  
date

Last day to  
change/drop  
courses

Tier 1 list  
compiled

Tier 1  
cert forms  
available to  
certifying  
officials

Tier 2 list  
compiled

Tier 2 forms  
available to  
cert officials

## Target timeline with the new process:

**Tier 1** certification forms would be available to certifying officials **3 full work weeks sooner**.

**Tier 2** certification forms would be available **1 full work week sooner**.

With **current process**, forms would become available to certifying officials around Jan. 27, 2026

# IMPROVEMENTS

## Weekly Advisor Action

**Advisors review and act on forms weekly, rather than waiting and processing in batches**

- Certification officials submit forms via Teams channel; advisors review weekly for errors
- Advisors track forms in the Dodie semester grid and flag discrepancies
- Amendment requests are logged in a shared spreadsheet for follow-up

## PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Speeds up processing by replacing backlogs with a rolling weekly review approach
- Fixes errors earlier and flags needed changes sooner
- Helps student-athletes adjust schedules before peak advising hits

# IMPROVEMENTS

## Fast Action on Flagged Forms

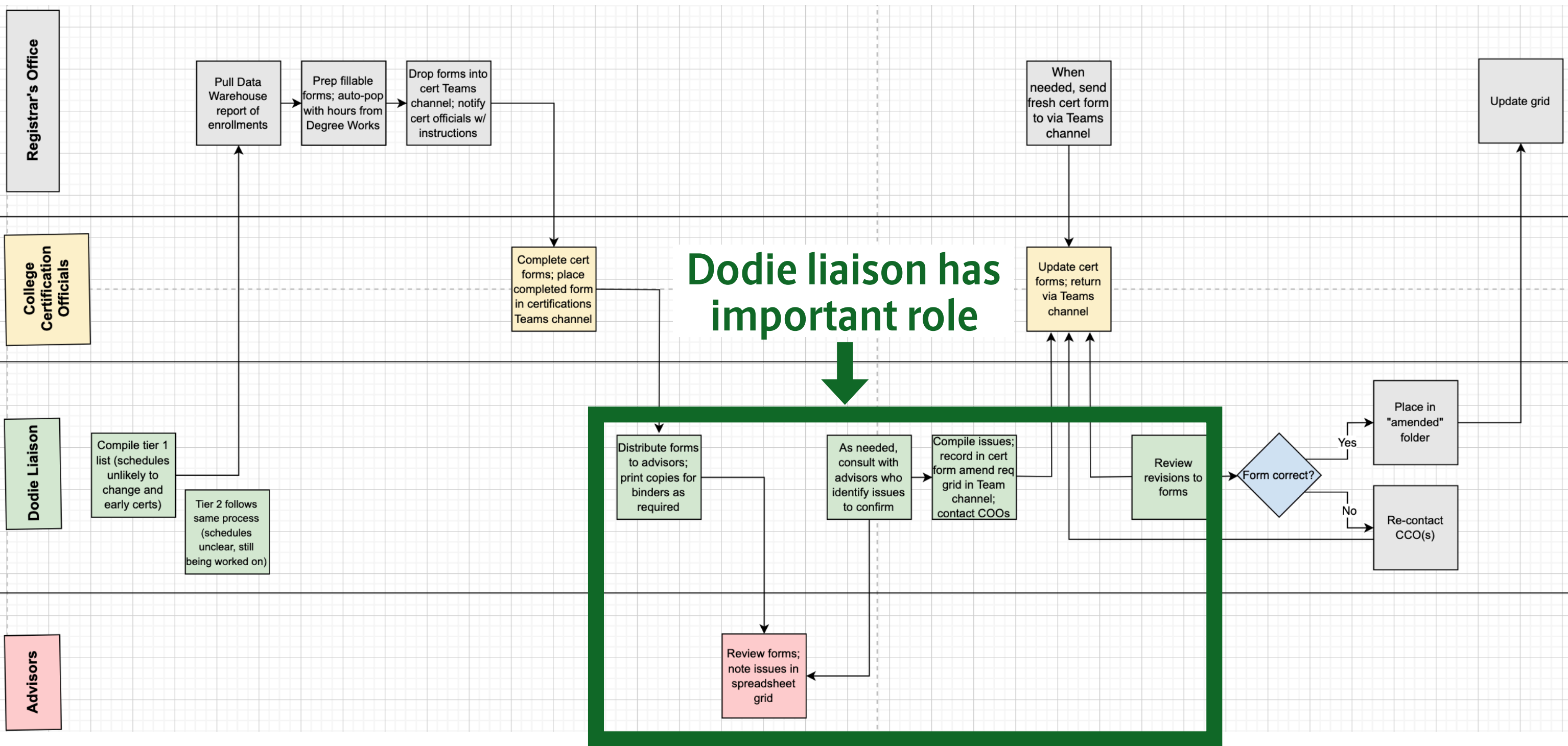
**Dodie liaison will monitor forms flagged by advisors – and quickly follow up with cert officials**

- Aim is to ensure prompt clarification, possible amendment, and resolution
- Dodie liaison will follow up on pending amendments to keep corrections moving
- Amended forms will be reviewed and confirmed accurate

## PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Enables quicker resolution of errors earlier in the semester
- Adds accountability to ensure timely follow-up and completions, fewer forms missed or delayed
- Registrar's Office will no longer have to field all the flagged forms – saving about 40 hours/semester

# PROPOSED FUTURE-STATE PROCESS



# IMPROVEMENTS

## Auto-fill forms

Use Degree Works to auto-fill “total hours earned toward degree” in certification forms

### PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Saves about 24 work hours per semester
- Makes forms available 3 days earlier

## Authoritative Source

Use Degree Works to determine degree-applicable hours and progress toward graduation

### PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Makes is easier to spot certification errors
- Reduces follow-up questions, which speeds up resolution
- Potential to cut resolution time by weeks

## Fall-through report

Before forms go out, provide report showing non-degree applicable courses

### PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Allows quicker identification of student-athletes in courses not applicable to degree reqs
- Enables schedule changes before Tier 1 forms are sent
- Cuts follow-up time by informing appropriate exceptions

# IMPROVEMENTS

Role-related

## Clarify and Strengthen Key Roles

### College Certification Officials

- **Expectation:** CCOs ensure advisors are well-trained and supported in their certification activities
- **Proposed:** Must be a Level 3 or 4 advisor, or supervise one (Seasoned advisors best equipped for role)
- **Proposed:** Write certification-related duties into job descriptions (If not already included)

### College Advisors

- **Proposed:** Must be a level 2 or 3 advisor with at least 3-4 years of advising experience at USC
- **Proposed:** Write certification-related duties into job descriptions (If not already included)



# IMPROVEMENTS

## Clarify and Strengthen Key Roles continued

### **Dodie Liaison**

#### **Role with the improved process:**

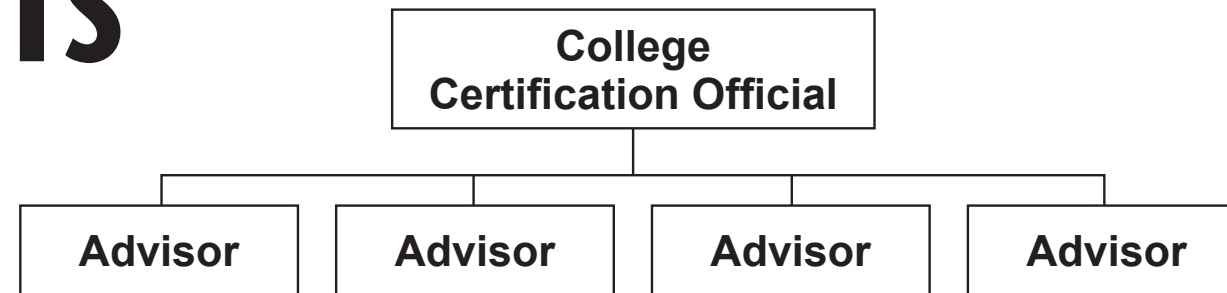
- Compiles Tier 1 and Tier 2 lists for Registrar
- Reviews discrepancies identified by advisors, and consults with them to confirm/clarify
- Monitors flagged forms and promptly reaches out to CCOs for timely corrections or clarifications
- Keeps Registrar's Office informed

### **Registrar's Office Liaison**

- **Changes:** (1) Gets Tier 1 and Tier 2 lists from Dodie Liaison. (2) Auto-fill of "total hours earned toward degree" in cert forms. (3) No longer fields flagged forms.

# IMPROVEMENTS

## Structure



**Establish a simple, standardized structure to bring organization to college's certification work**

- Begin with HRSM, Arts and Sciences, Business, Public Health, and Information Science (most student-athletes)
- Model allows for adjustments in the number of advisors based on departmental needs
- Annually, CCO determines and communicates to RO and Athletics who will fill advisor roles

## PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Clarifies lines of communication and strengthens accountability
- Strengthens units where lack of clear structure is causing confusion, delays, and unprocessed forms
- The model is proving its worth at HRSM, where certifications forms are processed more quickly

# IMPROVEMENTS

## Annual training

Require annual training for all CCOs and advisors, hosted by Registrar's Office and Athletics

### PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Builds a shared awareness of why this process is important
- Keeps everyone up to date on key regs, cert standards, process changes, roles
- Cultivates partnership and learning across colleges

## Joint education sessions

Hold joint education sessions for individual colleges with athletic academic advisors and college advisors

### PROJECTED RESULTS:

- Strengthens collaboration between athletic and academic advisors
- Builds alignment across departments, reducing errors and miscommunication
- Ensures knowledge transfer despite turnover

1. Background

2. Discovery

3. Improvements



## **4. KEY RESULTS**

5. Next Steps

6. Reflections

# KEY RESULTS

BEFORE	AFTER
Certification forms typically available to college certification officials about <b>2 weeks after class start date</b>	Target timeline: <b>Tier 1 forms available to cert officials 3 weeks <u>sooner</u> and <u>before</u> class start date</b> (Tier 1 = approx. 60-70% of certification forms)
	Target timeline: <b>Tier 2 forms available 1 week <u>sooner</u> and about 1 week after class start date</b> (Tier 2 is for schedules still being worked on before or soon after start date)
Cert forms often worked on at a point of peak workload in semester	With forms arriving earlier, processing can be done before workloads hit peak
Registrar's Office liaison has hands-on role through-out process, involving <b>12 steps</b>	Registrar's Office liaison role is focused to <b>5 steps</b> Saves the Registrar's Office an estimated <b>104 work hours</b> per semester
Roles, responsibilities, and the importance of this work are not consistently understood – which causes confusion, delays, and tasks falling through the cracks	Clear roles and consistent practices to improve accurate and timely processing – so that student-athletes are well-served and compliance is ensured

1. Background

2. Discovery

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4. Key Results



**5. NEXT STEPS**

6. Reflections

# NEXT STEPS

## Process-related

### **Use two-tier approach to process certification forms**

Point people: BJ and Justin

Rollout goal: Fall 2025 semester

### **Dedicated Teams channel**

Point people: BJ and Justin

Rollout goal: Early July (to be ready for Fall 2025)

### **Weekly review by advisors**

Point person: Justin

### **Dodie liaison monitors flagged forms**

Point person: Justin

Involved as needed: BJ



# NEXT STEPS

## Tech-related

### **Auto-fill forms from Degree Works**

Point person: BJ

Also involved: IT (Raj, Samrat) to build out report

Rollout goal: August (for Fall 2025)

### **Use Degree Works audit**

Point people: BJ and Maria

Also involved: Advising, IT

*Further discussion and development needed for this action*

### **Fall-through course report**

Point person: BJ

Also involved: IT-Raj

*In development – user acceptance testing underway in April 2025*

Rollout goal: May 2025

# NEXT STEPS

## Role-related

### Clarified and strengthened roles

Point person: Maria, In partnership with: Provost's Office, Advising

Target completion: End of June

### Standard structure for colleges

Point person: Maria

Also involved: Angie, Charlies, Justin

Target to begin communicating with colleges: May

Essential to review with leadership, incorporate their feedback, and build senior-level support.

### Annual training for CCOs/advisors

Point people: Charlie, Jane (Also involved: BJ, Kathy, Justin, et al)

Target completion: Mid-June (work is underway)

### Joint college sessions

Point people: Charlie, Justin (Also involved: BJ, Kathy, Justin, et al)

Target completion: Mid-June (work is underway – met with two colleges in the spring)

*Need to determine which colleges to meet and during which term – establish calendar.*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**South Carolina**