

YEAR-END REPORT, 2016

College of Natural Sciences Staff Committee

Committee Chair: Annette Hairston

Committee Members: Ana Aguilar, Enrique (Henry) Cantu, Ioana Gearba, Shannon Gutheil, Patricia Gutierrez, David (Brent) Halling, Heather Herrick, William (Bill) Wren

Dean's Liason: Patty Romano

Goal for the Year: Continue the charge of improving Communication, Training and Education, and Morale and Culture for CNS staff by increasing activities focused on these areas.

Summary of Work

We organized into Working Groups so that we could all share in meeting committee goals and objectives:

The New Employee Working Group is charged with developing and implementing a way to welcome new employees to the college and referring them to specific staff resources as requested and appropriate as they learn new duties. This committee is also charged with promoting CNSSC among all CNS staff.

Activities in the 2015-2016 Academic Year:

- Met with the college's communications office to design flyers, and approve the use of the college's logo on promotional items to be given to CNS staff members
- Researched cost of promotional items to be approved by the committee
- Fliers are being designed and promotional item options will be voted on among all CNSSC members in June
- Packets will be given to department HR representatives to hand out to new employees
- Assisted in other college wide events as needed

Recommendations for the 2016-2017 Year:

- Possible mentoring program for new employees

The Staff Development & Camaraderie Group is charged with bringing professional development/training in-house for all staff members and to increase a sense of community in the college by planning social gatherings.

Activities in 2015-2016 Academic Year:

- Organized two dessert socials, one at the beginning and the end of the academic year.
- Worked with Central HR and hosted two management training workshops:
 - Retaining and Rewarding Employees: Nearly 80 invited to attend; 13 of the 17 who registered actually attended the training
 - Managing Compensation and Classification: Nearly 80 invited to attend; 11 of the 24 who registered actually attended the training
- Worked with Central HR to present Retirement Benefits for all staff members: All staff members invited; 11 attended the event and some from off campus locations called in but experienced technical difficulty with video conferencing equipment
- Assisted in other college wide events as needed

Recommendations for 2016-2017 year:

- In addition to management workshops, bring in a variety of job specific training. Have door prizes related to job duties
- Increase CNSSC budget from \$1000 to \$2000 for the 2016-2017 academic year in order to fund breakfast or lunch for general committee meetings; this may increase meeting attendance and even improve retention of committee members
- Have larger, more meaningful Staff Appreciation Day/event, where the Dean stops in to thank staff for their significant contribution in making this college a success. Get staff volunteers to help with the planning, preparation, and implementation of the event activities
- Partner with Staff Counsel, EAP and other University staff resources to increase the effectiveness of staff services

The Communications/Blog Group is charged with increasing communication between the committee and CNS staff members using email, blogs, LinkedIn, and the committee website. This group also sends staff surveys.

Activities in 2015-2016 Academic Year:

- Created and disseminated staff communications blog for Spring 2016
- Moved all CNS Staff committee files from share point to UT Box
- Created CNS Staff Blog Site
- Standardized communications font size and type and headers for blog
- Updated CNS Staff page and website content
- Researched and created a LinkedIn Group for CNS Staff Committee to pilot
- Sent CNS Staff Committee event RSVP emails

Recommendations for 2016-2017:

- Implement LinkedIn Group for CNS staff/actively do pilot
- Continue communications blog & map out topics and dates for future blogs
- Do a follow up CNS Staff survey to find out more on how staff prefer to get college information sent to them
- Continue updating content on the website

180/360 Feedback and Performance Evaluation Group is charged with investigating ways to improve the performance evaluation process

Activities during 2015-2016 Academic Year:

- Researched and assisted in preparing a recommendation for the performance evaluation process
- Assisted in college wide events where needed

Recommendation:

- Recognizing that leadership plays a major role in morale, the committee believes that CNS staff members in managerial positions could benefit from management skill development and more accountability, at least in the form of upward feedback, being evaluated by their direct reports.

Based on the CNS Staff Task Force Report (January 2014, pg. 9), individual comments suggested that faculty acting as managers have been unsuccessful at cultivating positive relationships with their staff.

Around 45% of staff rated satisfaction with their supervisor's management capabilities somewhere between very dissatisfied to somewhat satisfied. We believe this should improve, even though around 55% rated satisfaction as either satisfied or delighted (page 16).

We believe that supervisors should get non-punitive feedback from their direct reports, giving supervisors possible insight into where they can improve in their management style, and in turn create a happier and more productive workplace. According to Jesse Dagilis (2016) feedback from subordinates can be difficult to receive, but it is through these employee assessments that managers can identify areas to improve upon as leaders that they may not have realized on their own. Neil Kokemuller (2016) says

in theory, if a top-down assessment of employee performance helps motivate improvement, subordinate reviews should motivate managers to address areas of weakness or need.

We recommend giving employees the option to give their perception of their relationship with their supervisor, and to suggest ways to improve any job related problems or concerns. This could be done either through a confidential process, or through an added question on staff performance evaluation forms.

Supervisors should receive training on how to receive upward feedback. According to Impraise.com (2016), managers should be explicit about not holding the input against the feedback giver, so employees don't have to worry about speaking up in the future.

We also recommend that information volunteered from staff about their supervisor be used solely for cultivating better work environments and relationships.

Problems Encountered by the CNS Staff Committee

It has been difficult to get representation from each department on the committee.

Retention of committee members is a significant problem, with heavy membership turnover.

General meeting attendance drops after the first few meetings, once members become overloaded with job duties.

Getting nominees to chair the committee has been difficult. The concern seems to be the ability to handle the workload of chairing the committee in addition to job responsibilities.

Although many are invited to attend training and social events, the number who actually attends is small by comparison.

Budget Expenditures fiscal year 2015-2016:

\$60.58, Einstein's bagels and coffee for supervisor training on 1/6/2016

\$60.58, Einstein's bagels and coffee for supervisor training on 3/24/2016

\$414.48, O's dessert social event on 5/26/2016

\$404.36, Estimate for CNSSC promotional materials

\$60.00, Estimate for refreshments for first 2016-2017 committee meeting

Impact of the CNS Staff Committee:

We believe we are making some improvement in training and staff morale. Communication to staff from the staff committee has improved.

According to the 2015 Staff Climate Survey results, CNS staff members are highly dissatisfied with the clarity and fairness of the merit process and the competitiveness of their salary. We are unable to address these important issues and feel we are not making an impact where staff seem to want it most.

However, the feedback we are getting is mostly constructive and positive. At our dessert socials, we left writing pads and pens on tables and asked staff to leave comments or suggestions. This is what some of them said:

I think the CNS Dean's office should have some sort of monthly "welcome" meeting for new employees. I came from McCombs, and they do this there. It's a great opportunity to feel included in CNS, learn more about the college, and meet other new staff members. I have worked here for almost two years, and I've never met anyone in the CNS Dean's office. It is very isolating, and a completely different experience than I had at McCombs.

Events like these are great opportunities to meet new staff and to visit with folks we rarely see.

It would be nice to have more events like this one. More opportunities for training would be nice.

CNS T-shirts, give away, drawing, raffle; free software for departments, office supply rooms for each department; activities with the Dean-Dinner/lunches; CNS gym membership or discount program for staff; access to parking-summer passes, weekend parking; coffee and tea all the time!! (free)

I think a Christmas party with all of CNS Dean's office and spouses or friend(s) invited; more staff events...bowling, pot lucks, etc.

Merit Raises should be all kept at the same level. Don't say there is no money for raises when some staff people get 1.5% [and] others get 80%. It looks bad and unfair when you get a good evaluation, but [your] raises say otherwise.

Flexible time schedules are very important.

Instead of food and drink social time, we could have a bowling, Zumba, Yoga social time. It would be fun and good for health.

Something with breakfast tacos!

I would like to see more training for CAD type programs like Solid Works.

Going on a hike/outdoor event somewhere (when the weather is nice fall/spring), so we can get outside and get to know each other.

A fun activity such as bowling that also promotes team building and bonding.

Why not have a monetary staff award for an outstanding staff person.

Physical activity bonds people together...bowling, Zumba/Yoga classes. If CNS worked to bring an instructor to the college who offered reduced rate classes, there would be a lot of interest. Thank you!

Maybe a staff bowling league at the union?

I would like to see more research administration training, particularly budgeting and cost sharing.

When the new system comes out in January to replace DEFINE and HRMS, please have lots of in-house training! We're already nervous about this!!!

In-house training/presentations desired: Hands on DEFINE (not a module to click through online, but live training).

I would like to thank the Dean's office for all their help with our questions--- Salvador Rojas, Christina Rosales, Hannah Kim, you guys rock!

By the way, I love this little dessert soirée: Fun and relaxing for this time of year. Thank you!

I think prof. Development training is very important. Self-assessment such as True Colors, Strength Development etc. would be ideal. I would also suggest departmental communication and team building.

I would like to see more Big Picture training. For example: effort certification, how it dovetails with writing a budget justification, and budgeting in general for personnel.

Thanks for today's little appreciation notice/social. Very nice.

A portion of a Staff Appreciation Day for special interest groups to get together, games, bowling, movies or nerd science-type programs?

Should offer professional development training that would aide in growth in current and future positions.

Teams—Softball? Basketball? Soccer etc.? Something co-ed, so everyone can participate if they are interested.

I very much appreciate and agree with the direction in which the college is headed. I am really behind the college's strategic plans.

2016-2017 Committee Members:

Continuing (2nd year)

1. Henry Cantu, Astronomy Department
2. Shannon Gutheil, Health Professions Office
3. Patricia Gutierrez, First Year Advising Center
4. David (Brent) Halling, Center for Learning and Memory
5. Heather Herrick, Marine Science Institute
6. William (Bill) Wren, McDonald Observatory

New

7. Michele Landfield, Physics Department
8. Elizabeth Osterndorff-Kahanek, Waggoner Center
9. Tiffany Carmichael, Center for Systems and Synthetic Biology
10. Clovis (Ryan) Bass, Sullivan Lab, Molecular Biosciences
11. Bradley (Brad) Winters, Center for Learning and Memory
12. Philip Pool, Chemistry Department
13. Cierra Campbell, University Leadership Network program

Special Thanks:

- To Dean Hicke for establishing a staff committee and allowing us to share our recommendations with her, and for funding training, social events, and promotional item purchases.
- To the business office, especially Gail Davis, for approving OOEFs and processing payments.
- To retiring committee members for their two years of service and support.

References

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