

'ACTION CONVERSATIONS:' REPORTING TEMPLATE

Date, Time, and Place of Conversation: Wednesday, September 10, 2014

Duration of the Conversation: one hour, 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

Conveners: Sarah Blakeslee, Annette Heilesen, Sandra MacNevin

Moderator: Sandra MacNevin

Reporter: Joanne Davis

Number of Participants: 9 participants, including conveners and recorder

Type of Participants: staff, managers, and retiree

Theme # 5 – Staff Renewal

The major ideas / proposed actions / implementation steps/ assessment of priorities emerging from this conversation are:

1. Professional Development:

- Staff expressed the concern that they don't have the resources at times to help them with processing various daily tasks, particularly when new staff begin their positions at the university. Others noted that many resources exist, but we need to improve communications and make it easier for new staff and current staff to find the resources they need for training and when they encounter challenges in carrying out their tasks. Staff noted that when they search online, it is difficult to find the information they need and the information is located at various sites on the university's website. It was recommended that we work together to improve communication regarding the resources available and possibly consider a version of a "one-stop-shop" site for the kinds of information staff routinely use, particularly ASC staff. It was also suggested that more training and professional development workshops be offered to staff based on their needs assessment, and that supervisors be encouraged to allow staff to attend these training sessions during their work hours in order to benefit the department, college and/or unit in the long term. If release time is not possible

in some cases, it was suggested that training sessions might be offered during the lunch period. It was also suggested that “best practices” be identified in relation to improving communication as well as identifying expertise on campus. Basic training was recommended for new ASCs and AA/S staff in order for them to have consistent and reliable information. It was also suggested that staff be acknowledged for their efforts with regard to professional development efforts, and it was noted that when you do the online training of some campus modules, a certificate of completion and/or achievement is provided. This was noted as one way to concretely recognize staff accomplishments and achievements but other acknowledgement methods should also be explored to increase staff morale and acknowledge staff efforts. Staff noted that training and professional development programs and opportunities should be based on staff needs assessments, through the use of surveys or other instruments. Rewarding staff by encouraging them to attend professional development conferences and other outside events was also noted. The onboarding of new staff was also discussed noting the role of orientation with HR, but also what the unit can do to onboard new staff and provide information and training. Perhaps explore best practices in this area, or put together resources that might be shared across the Academic Affairs Division.

2. Technological Tools to Support Staff:

- Staff noted that each department needs an IT support person to help when ITSS is not readily available, perhaps identifying someone as a technology “trouble shooter” who is willing to be called upon to help out at times when ITSS is not available on some problems. It was recommended that a needs assessment be taken of staff technology needs in each area to determine the equipment and software that is needed. It was also suggested that a review of the ticket system be undertaken with regard to the ITSS help desk process. It was recommended that ITSS streamline its process. It was also suggested that more cross-divisional collaboration take place when forms are developed so as to meet the needs of the end user and to create a one-stop-shop website with all forms of the university, or at least links that will take staff members to the appropriate forms on other web pages of the university. It was also recommended that the university’s internal search engine be kept up to date. It was also noted that there are training sessions taking place and/or resources for technology training that staff are unaware of, and it was recommended that we do a better job of

communicating that information to all staff on campus and in Academic Affairs in particular.

3. Staff Wellness

- Staff expressed the concern that there should be some kind of ergonomic training and information provided to educate employees regarding ergonomic safety and wellness matters, as well as options for acquiring ergonomic equipment and furniture. It was suggested that Environmental Health and Safety be contacted to provide workshops that would be available to discuss ergonomic issues. It was further suggested that experts be brought in to provide tips on how to address ergonomic issues in the work place. In addition, it was suggested that Environmental Health and Safety might send out emails to the campus from time to time with tips for ergonomic best practices, and also notices of workshops conducted on this theme, along with contact information for questions and information staff may have related to ergonomic issues and the resources available to address them. Again, the issue of doing a better job internally of communicating what we already offer in this area came up, and the fact that we already have a lot of resources in this area but need to do a better job of getting the information out and communicating to staff was noted.

4. Building Community as Part of Staff Renewal

- Staff and managers at the meeting noted that we need to break down the silos between departments and units and work together with staff across units with regard to the different types of jobs that staff perform. It was suggested that perhaps email newsletters from units or a division-wide email newsletter would be helpful to provide information on upcoming events, newly hired employees, and other information to inform employees about what is going on within and among units. An example of two best practices in relation to building community among staff is the annual Staff Award Luncheon, as well as the Coffee and Kudos program. It was recommended that managers and supervisors be encouraged to provide release time for staff to attend more cross-divisional events or cross-unit events in order to get to know other staff, faculty and administrators and students in other programs and departments.

Note: *A theme that came up with the discussion of each of the issues noted above was the need to better communicate what we are already doing well, to identify best practices and communicate them to others, and to build community across departments, units, colleges and divisions of the university.*