



2013-14
Advancing the Agenda Workgroup Report
Staff Engagement

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Executive Summary

The Advancing the Agenda workgroup was tasked with working with local and system administrators to complete or maintain the momentum of CUCSA projects. The groups started follow up on multiple initiatives¹. After a few follow-up attempts, two projects gained momentum and in December 2013, staff engagement and education benefits were named by CUCSA leadership as the areas focus for the group. This paper covers the staff engagement component of the group's work.

Why is staff engagement important and how can it be increased? *Staff engagement is good business. It may only take satisfying 4 core needs to increase employee productivity.*

Forbes, contributor and author Kevin Kruse writes: "...engaged employees...care about their work and their company. They don't work just for a paycheck, or just for the next promotion, but work on behalf of the organization's goals."² A recent study³ identified that satisfying 4 core needs leads to employees feeling satisfied and productive: "[1] physical, through opportunities to regularly renew and recharge at work; [2] emotional, by feeling valued and appreciated for their contributions; [3] mental, when they have the opportunity to focus in an absorbed way on their most important tasks and define when and where they get their work done; and [4] spiritual, by doing more of what they do best and enjoy most, and by feeling connected to a higher purpose at work"⁴. There is growing evidence that meeting these core needs for employees fuels their productivity, loyalty, and performance thus increasing organizational performance.

Background

University of California (UC) staff⁵ responded to CUCSA's systemwide [staff engagement survey](#) in mid-2012. The goal of the survey was to understand the current state of engagement of the UC workforce, how it differs by key organizational segments and demographics, and determine what drives staff engagement at UC specifically. Results were tabulated systemwide and campus specific results were shared with local leaders. Survey follow-up efforts have differed by location. It is important to note that some campuses and locations⁶ have non-CUCSA engagement surveys and some campuses had major changes in executive leadership that influenced how they used (or did not use) their CUCSA survey results.

Introduction

The goal of this paper is to communicate lessons learned from the initial systemwide attempt at measuring staff engagement and using the survey results to increase engagement. This paper also includes links to sample materials used in survey follow-up efforts. The lessons learned heavily rely on UCOP's Staff Engagement Initiative as it was the first location to communicate its survey results to staff, develop staff-driven workgroups to clarify survey results, and develop short-, mid-, and long-term plans to address the recommendations that came out of the workgroups. The paper also benefited tremendously from the input of our CUCSA delegates, and our partnership with UCOP's Systemwide Human Resources - Employee Relations and local employee relations.

¹ The original projects list included: staff engagement, performance management and talent analytics, supervisor training, educational benefits, feedback regarding health and welfare changes, and compensation education.

² Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2012/06/22/employee-engagement-what-and-why/>

³ The study was conducted in the Fall of 2013 by Tony Schwartz (of the Energy Project, a consulting firm) and Christine Porath (associate professor at Georgetown University) in partnership with the Harvard Business Review.

⁴ Source: New York Times article "Why You Hate Work" May 30, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/opinion/sunday/why-you-hate-work.html?_r=0

⁵ Staff refers to non-represented career staff with at least 1 year of service

⁶ For example, UC Davis' medical center (and other UC medical centers), UCSF, UCSD, UCSB, and UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business have staff engagement surveys that are administered independently from CUCSA's survey and are administered at different times and with varying frequency.

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: How success is defined matters.

Each of the locations developed a different approach for delivering their local survey results and developing follow-up steps. Most of the lessons captured in this paper depend on a formal structure that was packaged as an initiative. The initiative included an executive sponsor, a steering committee, and workgroups tasked with analyzing survey results, and seeking clarity of the results via focus groups and interviews with staff. The workgroups used the additional qualitative data to create staff driven recommendations to address opportunities for growth that matched the survey. However, some campuses designed different mechanisms and strategies. Some campuses took their survey results and had their human resources teams begin addressing areas of concern to staff or highlighting programs that were started after the survey was administered. In some cases, campus leadership communicated results to employees and garnered employee endorsement of next steps and plans for improvement in one or two meetings. All of these approaches are successful strategies. Any use of the survey results is a success when the results are used to help define what staff engagement means at each campus and to set benchmarks and metrics for areas of concern to staff that can hopefully used an iterative process for improving staff morale.

Lesson 2: Survey results are great conversations starters.

The survey results are great for beginning a conversation between staff and executive campus leadership. The survey and results are a great introduction to the concept of staff engagement and help to define the concept. The survey is best used to focus on the broad takeaways and messages of the results and not the methodology details for example the survey results can yield parameters such as “Much of staff is concerned about their career development” or “Much of staff thinks there is room for improvement in the area of supervisor training”. The survey results are best used to establish a depersonalized dialogue and common language around the organization’s strengths and opportunities for improvement in areas of staff engagement. In other words, the results should not be used to blame a location for something they did not do; rather the results should be used them to begin an open dialogue on improving staff engagement based on specific and actionable survey results.

Lesson 3: Informal uses of the survey findings are powerful.

Even if the survey results are not used immediately to develop engagement strategies, the results can be used by new leadership to begin an informal dialogue with staff and other administrators. For example, campuses that experienced several changes in executive leadership after the survey was taken, used the survey results to begin understanding and framing plans for staff engagement at their location. At other locations, survey results were used to demonstrate the usefulness of the survey data to potential partners such as Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs). This year’s “Advancing the Agenda” workgroup followed-up with campus CHROs. This gave CHROs an opportunity to connect existing staff engagement efforts to the survey results. Making a connection between survey results and existing programs will allow campus human resources offices to use the survey results strategically. CHROs can use the future survey results as one parameter for testing the efficacy of their efforts. An example of an existing strategy can be found in Appendix B.

Lesson 4: Executive and staff champions are critical to the success of a staff engagement initiative.

Executive and staff champions are critical to establishing and executing a plan to address staff engagement issues. Buy-in and direction from an *executive leader* provides a message to the organization that staff engagement is a worthwhile investment of time and human resources across the organization. It empowers staff who will contribute their time to addressing engagement items the opportunity to prioritize their routine work with ad hoc contributions that result from, for example, a Staff Engagement Initiative. *Staff champions* are critical project managers that guide and implement the roll out of a staff engagement

initiative or other post-survey engagement models. Having both an executive and a staff champion are critical – one creates momentum and provides direction while the other keeps the momentum moving towards in agreed upon direction. Staff champions also demonstrate ground level commitment to executive leaders.

Lesson 5: Steering committees are critical too.

A steering committee comprised of staff, human resources, and communications representatives⁷ can support and guide the development of a strong initiative. In the case of the UCOP Staff Engagement Initiative, the steering committee provided the following functions and deliverables:

- Overall guidance around post-survey process and a roadmap
- Workgroup structures and selections of participants
- Guided and supported the workgroups
- Reviewed and provided feedback to staff recommendations and the action plans of workgroups
- Owned the post-survey roadmap and timeline
- Tracked and monitored the progress of workgroups
- Shared progress with executive sponsor and other UCOP stakeholders

The diversity of, yet specialized, expertise from each of those representatives was ideal for supporting the workgroups in guiding their deliverables.

Lesson 6: Existing professional development programs and affinity groups are great talent pools for initiative workgroups.

All campuses have professional development programs to one degree or another. Program participants for the most part self-select into participating in these programs which signals the employees desire for growth opportunities where they can practice newly acquired skills. At UCOP, all of the facilitators came from the mentorship program and the CORO Leadership Collaboration. Many of the team members came from OP's affinity groups and from motivated staff-at-large. The group's commitment and approach to developing staff-driven recommendations based on survey results and their final products were heavily influenced by the professional development programs and the employees' motivation to grow professionally.

Lesson 7: Staff engagement efforts are great community building and networking opportunities for staff.

Cross-functional teams create diverse perspectives and strong staff engagement recommendations. Closely related to Lesson 4, strategically assembled work teams provide opportunities for employees to work with colleagues in other departments. At UCOP, the Staff Engagement Steering Committee carefully picked workgroup participants. The steering committee ensured participants came from different departments, classification levels, and had varying years of service. Thought was also put into including different classification levels for topics such as performance management. The steering committee wanted to ensure that workgroups had representation from staff and managers in order to ensure diverse opinions and discussion of the survey results for that topic. The selection criteria and the marketing strategy⁸ were

⁷ Staff was represented by members of the OP Staff Assembly who were also CUCSA delegates. Human Resources was represented by OP's Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), Manager of Learning and Development, and an Employee Relations Specialist. Communications was represented by OP's Director of Internal Communications.

⁸ The marketing strategy included: emails to affinity groups, the OP Staff Assembly listserv, mentorship program alumni (which included mentors and mentees), and news articles in UCOP's employee newsletter "Link". We believe OP's large applicant pool was the result of using various communication channels but also a result of UCOP staff interested in growing professionally. Each year, professional development programs at OP can only serve a finite number of employees. We believe employees that were unable to participate given capacity constraints, saw participating in the Staff Engagement Initiative as an opportunity to stretch and grow in their careers at OP.

intended to communicate the initiative's intention of being as inclusive as possible of all types of employees. UCOP workgroup participants expressed the most satisfaction with the opportunity to work on cross-functional teams.

Lesson 8: Survey fatigue is real. Not communicating survey results decreases trust in surveys.

The Campus Climate Survey was administered very close to CUCSA's staff engagement survey. While the surveys had different audiences and goals⁹, from a staff perspective, the surveys seemed related; at a high level and tangentially they are a bit related, even though the questions were different. Some campuses also had existing engagement surveys, and at some campuses academic departments/units administered their own independent surveys. The existence of various tools created confusion among participants and administrators. In addition to the confusion, participants sometimes did not see the result of their responses and did not see their opinions acknowledged. From an administration and strategic perspective, multiple survey results with large volumes of responses are also difficult to operationalize in the midst of changes in leadership or difficult fiscal time periods where staff resources are just enough to get the regular work done. Using the survey results can be seen as a strain rather than as a benefit to staff and leadership. In these cases, informal actions (see lesson 3) might be the most successful of strategies as at least acknowledging their existence and some high level results can be communicated to staff as a sign that their opinions have been heard and that they matter. This is also important to ensuring high participation rates in future surveys.

Conclusions, recommendations, and next steps

2012 was the first year the CUCSA survey was administered. The survey and utility of the data can be viewed in various ways and much of it depends on how the data was or was not used. Some campuses communicated the results to staff, created strategies and plans and are implementing changes that reflect staff input. Some campuses communicated results to staff and are in the process of creating strategies and plans. Some campuses have communicated the survey results to staff and instituted organizational changes based on the survey results. Some campuses were overwhelmed by changes in executive leadership and/or financial impacts and have not used the survey results but without a doubt are implementing informal and formal staff engagement strategies. And some campuses are using non-CUCSA related survey results to continue with their existing engagement efforts.

We recommend all campuses celebrate taking the 2012 survey and be proud of the steps they took in light of the challenges at individual campuses. We also recommend that all campuses retake the survey if it is administered in 2015¹⁰. Each location stands to benefit from comparing its 2012 results with newer results. Regardless of the depth in the use of 2012 results at each location, all campuses have informal or formal engagement efforts that can be captured in this next survey. At the very least the 2012 results can be compared with the 2015 results to understand (with the benefit of a little history) current staff engagement in order to frame future strategies.

The workgroup also recommends that UCOP Systemwide Human Resources partner with local HR offices to inventory the other surveys administered to staff in a given period of time to address survey fatigue. The inventory would include a description of the goal of the survey, response rates, how the results are used,

⁹ The campus climate survey was intended to measure everyone's "...current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential" (Source: [Campus Climate Study Website](#)). The staff engagement survey was only administered to a segment of staff (as described in footnote 4) and its goals was to understand the current state of engagement of the UC workforce, how it differs by key organizational segments and demographics, and determine what drives staff to be engaged in their work at UC.

¹⁰ UCOP Systemwide Human Resources is exploring administering the survey in 2015.

and what has been accomplished. This information could be used to explore adopting a systemwide staff engagement tool that could yield cost savings to the campuses.

Our workgroup gathered and organized materials from UCOP's Staff Engagement Initiative. The materials include documents with descriptions to UCOP's Staff Engagement initiative goals, steering committee roles and responsibilities, communicating strategies for staff, fliers and emails used to recruit staff to participate in post-survey activities, and sample responses from subject matter experts to staff's recommendations. See Appendix A: Inventory of Staff Engagement Resources. Our goal in creating this resource is to support campuses and CUCSA delegates wanting to move forward on their staff engagement efforts. We hope that providing sample materials can help staff members doing this work implement an initiative that is tailored to their campus.

Appendix A: Inventory of Staff Engagement Initiative Resources

This section is organized in line with the initiative's implementation phase. Copies of those documents are made available as a resource to CUCSA delegates¹¹.

Phase1: Presentation of survey results to staff

Survey Results

[UC Systemwide](#)

[Berkeley](#)

[Davis](#)

[Irvine](#)

[Los Angeles](#)

[Merced](#)

[Riverside](#)

[San Diego](#)

[Santa Barbara](#)

[Santa Cruz](#)

[San Francisco](#)

[LBNL^{\(a\)}](#)

[UCOP^{\(b\)}](#)

Phase2: Formation of Engagement Team Structure and work groups

[Sample recruitment email for work group participants](#)

[Sample Engagement team structure](#)

Phase3: Progress report to staff

[Communications plan](#)

[Sample story for newsletter to staff announcing report back of preliminary recommendations](#)

[Flier advertising brown bag series that provided progress updates to staff](#)

Phase4: Presentation of survey engagement plan to leadership

[Leadership speaking points](#)

Phase5: Implementation of survey action items

[Sample brown bag presentation on career development by Chief Human Resources Officer](#)

[Sample brown bag presentation on performance management by Chief Human Resources Officer](#)

[Sample response to staff recommendations on communications by Communications Department](#)

[Proposal by subject matter expert in response to establishing a communications advisory group](#)

Other Communications

[Sample bullet points to communicate the status of your staff engagement efforts or initiative](#)

¹¹ If you would like to view a document please contact your location's [CUCSA representative](#) to obtain a copy.

^(a) Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

^(b) UC Office of the President

Appendix B: Example of a non-CUCSA related staff engagement strategy

This attachment captures UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business staff engagement strategy which existed prior to the CUCSA survey. These efforts are being highlighted to document existing strategies within smaller units at a campus that cannot be neatly captured under the CUCSA survey results and follow-up activities.

Grounded in its [strategic plan](#), the Haas School of Business began staff engagement efforts in 2011. The school has been administering their own engagement survey since 2011. After each survey, the Dean presents the overall results to the school. Supervisors and managers receive results specific to their unit. Units at the school consist of program offices, academic human resources, faculty support and a variety of operations that support teaching and research. The school has used the survey results to create experiential learning opportunities. Team members meet and create a collaborative environment to discuss how to interpret the results and to decide on what to do with the results. One of the most promising components of these efforts is that supervisors and managers are receiving training programs tailored to address the input of staff on the survey. In addition, the performance evaluations of supervisors and managers have metrics to measure their progress towards addressing staff input and the performance evaluations of supervisors and managers are scheduled to work in conjunction with the survey schedule.

The school is also intentional in how it creates a culture of open dialogue between supervisors and staff. Below is a sample message to staff that encourages staff to provide all types input.

"The YOU@Haas Staff Engagement Survey 2013 can help Haas focus on what's really important ... but only if career and contract employees throughout the school participate. *Whether you have positive opinions or constructive criticism to share, Haas wants to hear from you. No one else can represent you, your views and your experience.* This May 2014 the school continues its commitment to supervisors and managers with a one day training entitled Engagement Conversations which was developed by Blessing White, Inc. for the UC Management Development Program for Senior Managers. The content is being tailored to Haas and the program will be facilitated by Paul Carroll, Senior Organizational Consultant – UC Berkeley Learning + Organizational Development."

While the frequency of the Haas School efforts and their schedule of activities may not work for other units there are aspects of their strategy other units could benefit from exploring in a slightly modified manner that reflects the needs of their departments.