Committee on Campus-wide Communications

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Purpose
Staff Assembly would like to provide specific actionable steps to campus leadership to address issues identified in the 2012 CUCSA Staff Engagement survey. The 2012 survey results indicate that UC Davis has statistically significant differences along a variety of communications related issues including the ability of staff to provide open and honest communication up through the organizational hierarchy, and also issues related to “top-down” communication which includes staff receiving information on major organizational changes.

Strategy
To address the issues noted, more specific information and focus is needed in areas where changes can be implemented. The focus should include communicating information, ideas, and issues up through the organizational hierarchy as well as communicating organizational changes to the rest of the campus.

We used/will use the following mechanisms to gather information:

- Conducted a survey of staff in May 2014 to confirm issues that surfaced in the 2012 survey and identify specific areas for further exploration in future focus group discussions.
- Conduct focus groups to determine changes that staff could foresee improving communications.
- Analyze the focus group results and recommend changes to campus leadership.

Survey Results
Staff Assembly conducted a survey from May 16 to June 6, 2014. The survey was publicized in Dateline and the Staff Voice newsletter which reaches over 5,000 UC Davis staff. We received responses from 244 individuals, which yields a +/- 6% accuracy for the total population.

Answers to the survey questions indicated the following:

- A large majority of respondents are interested in receiving campus-related news “all the time.”
- Their preferred delivery mechanisms, which include emails from the Chancellor and Dateline, are in place and being used.
- Most respondents have taken the initiative to communicate concerns, ideas and suggestions with their supervisors.
- Most respondents indicated that they have either received no response or no follow-up after a supervisor promises to “look into” an idea or suggestion they communicated.
• Some respondents will NOT communicate with their supervisor for fear of retaliation or because past experiences have led them to believe that the effort is “useless.”

Some of the more noteworthy points that emerged from the data include:

1. Staff are interested in suggesting ideas for improvement, and do so on a regular basis, but a majority of the ideas they suggest move no further than a supervisor promising to “look into it.”

2. Staff members believe that “implementing changes as a result of communications efforts,” and “having a supportive supervisor or unit/department leader that can escalate and support ideas,” are changes that would improve communications and motivate staff to communicate.

3. A majority of survey respondents receive information about major campus decisions and initiatives from Dateline (80.41%).

4. More than 50% of staff rate their department/unit’s communication on important matters as fair to poor.

5. Several comments emphasized the need for trust in both the ability to provide information (upward communication) without negative repercussions and the ability to trust that leadership is communicating honest and complete information.

Next Steps

Staff Assembly, with the support of the Chancellor, will work with two independent, third-party consultants to conduct five focus groups to identify the most common communication issues and discuss strategies for realizing solutions. Three focus groups will include staff from the Davis campus while two will include staff on the Sacramento campus. The approach for populating each survey group is to solicit a broad representation of staff (academic and non-academic staff, field and office staff, supervisors and line staff).

Following an analysis of the focus group results, Staff Assembly will provide a list of recommendations to campus leadership on the next steps as well as mechanisms to evaluate the success of any changes implemented.