Committee on Campus-wide Communications

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Staff Assembly felt it was critical to craft a response to the focus group report developed by external consultants, EA Jones Consulting Group & Sue Woods Consulting Services. While the consultants served as a neutral, third party to mitigate concerns about perceptions of possible bias, Staff Assembly representatives felt the quality of the consultants' report was lacking given their insufficient understanding of the campus, its staff, and attendant campus climate issues.

Staff Assembly’s list of recommendations also takes into consideration a number of other campus reports and survey results. These include the 2012 CUCSA engagement report, the 2014 UC Davis campus communications survey conducted by Staff Assembly, the 2014-15 Office of the Ombuds Annual Report, the 2015 CUCSA engagement survey results, and the report provided by Jones Consulting Group & Sue Woods Consulting Services following the 2015 focus groups. All of these reports have common themes we believe can be addressed by implementing a set of recommendations.

Staff Assembly recommends the campus move forward with the following:

• Require campus leaders to implement communication programs that include staff at all levels
• Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure that ideas, suggestions, and concerns are addressed in a timely manner
• Reward staff who communicate ideas, suggestions, and concerns
• Change or eliminate mechanisms and processes that hinder reporting problems and concerns
• Provide mechanisms to easily identify the most appropriate way to communicate
• Develop a true One UC Davis approach to help remove the perceptions of organizational separation between the campus and health system
• Improve “trust” in the organization by acting on changes, measuring progress, and reporting results

Recommendation Details

Require campus leaders to implement communications programs that include staff at all levels

Improve staff engagement locally, beginning with programs that each department, college, school or division can implement. Deans and vice chancellors should be tasked with developing regular communication channels that transcend the hierarchy. The channels could include a regularly maintained web site or regularly produced newsletter focusing on internal staff as the main audience. Deans and vice chancellors should create an internal staff advisory group to report specific staff issues and use them as a sounding board for evaluating ideas and future initiatives. The advisory group can help communicate for both directions (informing line staff of major issues/concerns from leadership and informing leaders about issues and ideas from the staff). We further recommend that each dean or vice chancellor be made accountable for the implementation and success of programs designed to communicate internally.

Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure ideas, suggestions, and concerns are addressed in a timely manner

Email does not work as a tracking or accountability mechanism to address ideas, suggestions and concerns. Similar to how other “work tickets” are created, tracked, and resolved or closed, we recommend dedicating resources to create or adopt mechanisms for tracking, responding to, and addressing ideas and suggestions. This can be analogous to systems and processes put in place by the College of Engineering and School of Law to track technical problems and issues. That
system identifies a “caller” as well as the date and time the issue was submitted, when and to who it was assigned to, what steps were taken to fix the issue, and when it was “resolved.” All of the steps and the status of the idea or suggestion should be visible to the individual who reported it so they know work is being done and who “owns” the next step.

Reward staff who communicate ideas, suggestions, and concerns
The campus should seek out and chronicle instances where an individual staff member’s idea or suggestion was implemented. This can be done at all levels, campus-wide or at each department and they can leverage the Staff Voice as well as department newsletters. In addition, such staff can receive spot awards, especially if their idea or suggestion saves considerable effort or money or reduces a potential liability for the campus.

Change or eliminate mechanisms and processes that hinder reporting problems and concerns
Departments should identify and eliminate hurdles for staff or visitors to report problems. This includes requiring people who report facilities problems to provide an “account” (that may or may not be used for billing) to fix the problem reported. Systems and processes to report problems should capture only information relevant to fixing the problem and all other “required” information should be reevaluated.

Provide mechanisms to easily identify the most appropriate way to communicate
Create a simple communication guide (one page matrix) and make it available for wide distribution. This matrix will identify the option or options each staff can take to report a problem, suggest an idea, or communicate an issue or concern. The matrix can include a variety of venues from their own supervisor to the campus Ombuds Office. The matrix should include the responsibility for each of these reporting venues.

Develop a true “One UC Davis” approach to help remove the perceptions of organizational separation between the campus and health system
UC Davis leaders should increase their visits, visibility and engagement with staff at other campus locations. Staff members need the opportunity to engage leaders casually as well as formally. “One UC Davis” should not simply be a slogan.

Improve “trust” in the organization by acting on changes, measuring progress, and reporting results
Dedicate the time and effort to act soon to implement changes. Respond to these recommendations and the consultant’s report by identifying changes, individuals or groups responsible, and measuring success. Report regularly on the progress and “check-in” with staff to determine if changes are moving UC Davis in a positive direction.

Conclusion
In conclusion, Staff Assembly feels strongly that the recommendations above are reasonable and asks that the campus take steps to implement them. Staff members expressed a need to see action rather than more surveys. Not acting could result in a loss of credibility for future efforts to gather information from staff. We also believe our recommendations should be considered and coordinated with other groups on campus addressing similar concerns about communications and engagement.

We want to recognize that the surveys and focus groups also provided examples of positive efforts both locally, within departments (newsletters, committees that include line staff), and also across campus (Breakfast with the Chancellor and Dateline, for example). We hope the campus continues these initiatives and channels that were mentioned as effective ways to communicate.

Staff Assembly would be happy to assist and consult on the next steps.