Creating Collaborative Excellence

Prepared For:
University of California, Davis
Staff Assembly

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Staff Assembly engaged the consulting team of Sue Woods and Estell Jones to conduct five focus groups to more deeply explore the communication issues raised in the Staff Assembly 2014 Communications Survey. Three focus groups were conducted with UC Davis campus staff; two focus groups were conducted with UC Davis Health System staff. Thirty-eight individuals participated. Respondents ranged in years of service from 2 years to 42 years and represented a broad diversity of ethnicity and gender, as well as a cross-section of colleges, departments and units, job titles, and supervisors and non-supervisors.

The focus groups raised a number of fundamental communication issues. Communication is inconsistent with not all staff being fully informed about initiatives, policies and changes that impact the jobs they perform and their daily lives. They reported their input is frequently not solicited and sometimes not welcome. They have first-hand knowledge of inefficiencies and waste, but there is no safe process to offer suggestions for improvement. Retaliation is said to be a major factor in not speaking up. The result is that staff at the two UC Davis campuses do not always feel valued.

Staff has a strong desire to make UC Davis one of the top ten employers in the Sacramento region. They want to be informed in a timely manner. They want to participate in creating efficient and effective campus and Health System operations that benefit students, patients, visitors and staff. They want to know their input is heard – whether it’s accepted or not. They want to engage in collaborative problem-solving and be recognized for the good work they do and the contributions they make to the success of the campuses.

Recommendations are summarized as follows (details can be found on pages 3 - 20):

- Enhance communication channels and information management.
- Clarify procedures to report a problem or improvement; require timely responses.
- Provide a safe and secure working environment at the Health System for all employees, patients, customers, suppliers, students and visitors.
- Improve staff engagement by fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment at all levels. Make staff participation and involvement fundamental to decision-making. Recognize staff contributions.
- Develop a process for handling perceived retaliation issues and develop a culture of trust.
- Initiate interactive and personal opportunities for staff to engage with and be heard by all levels of leadership.
- Establish a planned organization culture change at UC Davis campus and Health System.
- Adopt, train to and implement best practices in institutional procedures.
- Improve individual competencies (leadership, academics and staff).
There are no magic bullets, quick fixes, management programs or employee trainings that will immediately resolve the communication issues outlined in this report. It is hoped that this report can begin an authentic dialogue with staff and leadership alike to create a more cooperative, collegial and professional working environment that provides staff with a high level of job satisfaction. It will require a commitment from leadership to the guiding principles and values of open communication, honest feedback, inclusive decision-making and staff recognition. Equally, staff must commit to engaging with leadership to improve the work environment.
In response to the communication issues raised, there are many opportunities to make improvements. The purpose of these recommendations is to offer options for consideration to address reported issues, allow staff to continue to provide outstanding service to students and patients alike, and contribute to the job satisfaction of the dedicated staff. Reference to the Leadership Team includes supervisors, managers and administrators.

The recommendations contained in this report represent the professional experience and judgment of Sue Woods and Estell Jones (Consulting Team) who conducted the focus group interviews. The nine recommendations below are prioritized based on the feasibility to implement and the impact to staff, as well as the judgment of the consulting team.

- **Enhance communication channels and information management.**

  **Problem Statement:**

  There is not a uniform and consistent method for communicating general and job-related information to all staff. There also exists a tension between too much and too little information, filtered information and restricted access to information.

  **Narrative:**

  Communication is the key to any effective organization. Staff wants to feel they are part of the organization; they want to feel “in the know.” Staff reports that they do not always receive general and job-related information in a consistent or timely manner. Staff without access (or with minimal access) to computers are further restricted in the information they get because they do not receive electronic communications. Additionally, some supervisors and managers think that filtering information and presenting only that which they deem is important is helping the information flow. Others operate on a “need to know” basis. More often than not, either approach only builds distrust of management. Open communication and transparency are key elements in building a strong team and getting at good solutions to problems. If it can be shared, it should be shared.

  **Selected Interview Quotes:**

  “I need to go to both the Davis campus and the HS newsletters to get enough information.”

  “There is a sense of ‘you don’t need to know.’”

  “We don’t get a lot of communication from our leadership.”
“Updates don’t always get to all staff.”

“People appreciate information being shared as soon as it’s known, especially when decisions affect our daily life.”

**Action Steps:**

- Consider creating a primary communications vehicle for general information.
  - Focus on one main vehicle for mass communication of general information (e.g., *Dateline, The Insider*, or other widely read news source). The electronic version should have summary paragraphs with links to the full article. A hardcopy edition should be distributed to those without regular access to computers. Posting a copy on a bulletin board does not achieve the same benefits as providing individual copies to staff. While a hardcopy would increase the cost, the cost would be well worth having an informed and participatory work force.
  - While one main media channel will provide a “go to” source for current information, interviewees appreciated multiple sources. To enhance communications, explore alternative options for sharing information using current tools and technology.

- Encourage the editors of *Dateline* and the other UC Davis campus and HS newsletters to collaborate and coordinate on content so staff doesn’t feel like they have to go to multiple sources to get enough information.

- Staff at HS reported their ‘Friday email blast’ was very helpful, featuring the top 5-6 bulleted items extracted from campus and HS with links to more details. Consider providing the same service for the UC Davis campus.

- Prioritize the news information given to staff. Put information on initiatives and good news at a different level than the information that directly impacts jobs.

- Within individual departments/operating units, designate an internal centralized communications person tasked with the duties of facilitating top down and bottom up communications. The designee could help filter emails, news and other announcements and update staff on information most relevant to the group. This point person would be selected by staff to represent the perspective of staff. The designated point person should rotate every six months.

- Create options for staff to filter and personalize the digital information they receive.
  - Create topic-specific listservs where individuals can subscribe to topics they are interested in. Send emails to subscribers with links to new or updated information.
Use a ZITE site approach to allow staff to customize their own website to receive desired information.

- Create a top-level directory of campus blogs.
- When launching a new communications process, conduct a pilot project to determine its effectiveness, acceptability and efficacy prior to adopting campus-wide.
  - Create a pilot program for an interactive website/online community forum (e.g., Reddit) to facilitate 2-way communication and voting on various topics of interest. Staff, faculty and leadership all to engage in the forum.
  - To test the efficacy of a pilot program, create metrics to evaluate the success of the program before launching. An employee satisfaction survey could be designed and given to staff both before and after the implementation of the program. Comparing the before and after survey results would help evaluate the success of the program.
- Develop opportunities for staff to socialize and collaborate with one another across departments and UC campuses to build and strengthen relationships, create a better flow of information and improve outcomes.

- Clarify procedures to report a problem or improvement; require timely responses.

**Problem Statement:**

When issues are reported, many staff feel that management is often unresponsive to their concerns, needs and suggestions. Staff often does not know where to go to get their issues addressed. To complicate matters, it is perceived that the accounting system at Health System can penalize the reporting unit rather than appropriately charging the unit where the problem exists.

**Narrative:**

Staff often gives up reporting repair/maintenance issues and suggestions for improvements because the system makes it complicated to report problems and/or they do not get a response or see action on their issue. At the Health System, it is perceived that the unit of the person initiating the service request often gets billed for services even when the problem exists elsewhere.

A response to all suggestions is important. While the news may not always be favorable, a timely response demonstrates the issue was considered. Explaining the “why” of a decision
will help staff support outcomes. Periodic updates on the status of a suggestion, even if the report is “no progress,” should be provided. The lack of a response implies a lack of concern.

**Selected Interview Quotes:**

“We communicate over and over again with no response.”

“I’ve recently sent four emails on the same item to no avail. There seems to be no accountability.”

“Calls and email are not returned or acknowledged. Getting simple problems resolved is very hard.”

“Suggestions, ideas and concerns are beaten down – dismissed. It is defeating.”

**Action Steps:**

- Acknowledge and respond to all complaints, suggestions, staff emails and requests within a week, telling sender what the next steps are. Provide periodic status updates, even if the report is “no progress.” Let the sender know if their concern was addressed or idea implemented - or why not.
  - Respond to individuals with critical issues, i.e. health and safety and time-sensitive issues within the shortest amount of time possible to minimize risk to people and property.

- Identify and widely publicize a single central number on each campus that can triage repair/maintenance services and staff suggestions (without requiring callers to provide a “cost center” account number-HS). Thanking callers for their help in reporting problems will encourage them to continue doing so. Provide non-automated updates to reporters on the status of their suggestions/complaints.

- Provide a safe and secure working environment at the Health System for all employees, patients, customers, suppliers, students and visitors.

**Problem Statement:**

The safety and security for staff, students, patients and visitors at UC Davis HS has been compromised due to a lack of responsiveness to complaints about lighting, signage, alert and warning notifications and other health-related policies.
Narrative:
Numerous focus group participants at UC Davis HS complained that lighting and signage at the Health System is inadequate and dangerous. The alert and warning system does not appropriately notify staff of emergency situations. Quotes from employees validate these very important issues.

Selected Interview Quotes:
“When I leave late at night, it is dark (in some areas of the parking structure); this is a safety issue. Do I need to be assaulted to get lights fixed? I’ve spoken to them on multiple occasions to no avail, nothing happens, no response.”

“This (signage at HS) is about communication to patients. There are many lost patients wandering around; people go around in circles. People with breathing problems are lost and can’t find where they need to be. All of us in this room have told someone about this problem and there is no acknowledgment or correction to this problem. This experience will not give HS a good patient satisfaction rating.”

“There was a bomb scare and a knife-wielding person in my area and I never even found out. This makes me feel unsafe.”

“It is impossible to implement the smoking policy. The policy doesn’t fully exist here. The guidelines are not very clear as to where one can and can’t smoke and it puts employees in an awkward position to approach smokers and (not know) what to say or do then.”

Action Steps:
- Respond to staff concerns regarding safety and security within 24 hours.
- Ensure all staff know where and how to report safety issues.
- Assign a staff person to take the lead on putting together a cross functional team to investigate and document safety and security issues (including warning and notification), and lighting and signage issues. Ensure that someone on the team has project management skills. Get input from a diverse group of staff members and ask for volunteers to work on the team.
- Develop a plan to provide state of the art alert and warning systems and adequate lighting and signage for the Health System campus.
- Provide regular progress reports and updates to UC Davis HS staff and administration.
- Institute patient assistance kiosks at visitor entrances.
• Use a variety of education and outreach tools to inform staff, students and the public about the UC Davis smoking policy.

• **Improve staff engagement by fostering an inclusive and collaborative work environment at all levels. Make staff participation and involvement fundamental to decision-making.** Recognize staff contributions.

**Problem Statement:**

Staff does not feel they are an integral part of the decision-making process. Because they are involved with the work on a day-to-day basis, they often see inefficiencies and opportunities for improvements - yet feel they are seldom asked for their input. There is limited recognition for good ideas and a job well done. Staff often do not feel valued or appreciated.

**Narrative:**

Staff does not believe, for the most part, that they are included in the decision-making process at the department or campus level. Those impacted by changes are required to implement the changes but are not generally consulted in the development of the initiatives. Staff typically has valuable experience that could contribute to the successful development and implementation of changes. Staff recognizes that not every suggestion will be taken, but they believe they have input worth considering. When included in the process and consulted with, staff will feel heard and trust will be built.

In alignment with the Chancellor’s Vision of Excellence, the messaging is clear that shared governance is a priority for UC Davis:

- “Communicate timely and transparently on issues of interest to students, faculty, staff, and external constituents, and engage our various constituencies in decision-making, governance and advocacy.

- Increase the effectiveness of administrative and faculty-lead consultative and decision-making processes, in keeping with the principles of shared governance.”

Also in keeping with of the Chancellor’s Vision of Excellence, staff engagement, development and recognition require that UC Davis:
• “Recognize and support the integral role that staff members play in advancing the academic and institutional enterprise.

• Further the development of a talented, motivated workforce and a culture of service excellence, support professional development, and provide comprehensive compensation strategies, an equitable and supportive workplace and innovative recognition opportunities.”

Staff involvement may inspire cultural change and improve the work environment. Delegating tasks and encouraging decision-making at the lowest levels empower staff. Tapping into that resource can benefit the mission of UC Davis campuses.

**Selected Interview Quotes:**

“Engage us early on if we must be accountable for results and for implementing the efforts.”

“Your staff wants to succeed; they want the projects and UC Davis to succeed, too. I am an expert in the subject and am not brought into the process from the beginning. I am just asked to review a draft final document rather than helping develop it.”

**Action Steps:**

• Each major, college and operating unit to establish a staff advisory group to provide input and consultation to all planning efforts. Develop guidance to:
  
  o Include all affected parties (stakeholders) in the plan design process from earliest conceptual stage through implementation.
  
  o Solicit input from all affected parties through multiple venues and approaches (e.g. email, surveys, town halls, newsletters, web sites, staff meetings, brown bags, Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
  
  o Define stakeholders’ roles and how their input will be used so there is clear understanding by all staff of their scope of authority.
  
  o Communicate promptly the results and decisions to all affected staff.
  
  o Let staff know when and how their input has been used and if not, why not.
  
  o Evaluate the effectiveness of the change effort/initiative.

• Widely circulate information to staff as to what committees and subcommittees exist to tackle which issues, and how staff can become involved in committees to help develop solutions.

• The Leadership Team should promote creative thinking and collaborative problem solving and encourage informal communication between staff within and across departments and campuses.
Encourage staff to identify problems and propose solutions. Require managers to engage team members in problem solving. Promote cross-functional teams to problem solve issues that are inter-departmental.

Create a pilot project to bring together the people who are involved, impacted and care about an issue in a Kaizen corner type of format, creating a communal place for idea sharing and problem resolution with agreed upon solutions.

- Hire, promote and reward staff / administration who exhibit strengths in positive communication, collaborative problem solving and staff engagement.
- Elevate the positive. Ask staff to nominate departments/units that have exemplary staff engagement and communication practices and protocols. Request (appropriate division/unit) to visit and study what is working well and why. Look for UC Davis best practices, codify and promote.
- The Leadership Team should look for and express appreciation for jobs well done and move positive accomplishments upward. The appreciation must be more than saying “good job.” The appreciation must be specific and timely.
- Create or expand local employee recognition programs for colleagues to acknowledge one another and management to acknowledge staff. Provide certificates of appreciation. Multiple certificates could be moved up to management and lead to a larger reward and increased employee compensation.
- Staff Assembly could poll the various units/colleges/departments and find out what acknowledgment programs are in place; create a list of those programs and distribute the ideas with encouragement to adopt one suitable to their unit or create a new one. Include ideas that staff can introduce and implement as well as those that management would utilize.
- Incentivize suggestions both campus-wide and at the unit and department level.

- Develop a process for handling perceived retaliation issues and develop a culture of trust.

**Problem Statement:**

Fear of retaliation is a prominent issue. Staff is reluctant to report issues that they feel may cause retaliation. They do not want to be viewed as complainers or risk getting a bad performance review. Examples were cited about staff being punished for going over their supervisor’s head. Staff is unsure of where to voice their concerns when they are ignored by their immediate supervisor.
Narrative:

There is a need to create a culture that makes it safe for employees to bring forward any concerns or issues without fear of retaliation or negative repercussions; a culture that welcomes suggestions and ideas that will enhance the work environment. Suggestions should be viewed as improvements, not criticism. Creating a workplace that nurtures trust and open dialogue will help to lessen employee fears of retaliation. Managers must feel confident in their roles by setting proper expectations and holding others accountable. Staff needs to be encouraged to offer ideas and opinions that will make UC Davis a better place to work.

Selected Interview Quotes:

“There is a sense of apathy and fear. We can’t tell the truth. I resent the statement that ‘We are all in this together’.”

“I went to the leadership above my office and it made it worse. I’ve been ostracized ever since. Why would I ever say there is a problem again?”

Action Steps:

● Acknowledge and respond to staff concerns in a sensitive and timely manner.
  ○ Respond immediately to individuals with critical issues (i.e., harassment, health and safety, etc.).

● Trust is of paramount importance to an aggrieved party; offer multiple options for reporting, discussing and resolving issues.

● Publicize current UC Davis and CA State policies and procedures and the availability of services such as the Ombuds office. Ensure Ombuds office has training in current laws and HR procedures regarding retaliation and investigation of complaints regarding potential retaliation; offer a central point of contact to triage concerns/issues.

● Provide training to managers/supervisors on the issue of retaliation (including laws, policies, procedures, and HR protocol), appropriate corrective actions, and creating a work climate that will lessen fears of retaliation.

● Provide a confidential anonymous feedback system for staff to provide comments/concerns without fear of retaliation and for the concerns to be reviewed by a third party neutral. A forum for combining confidential input would provide more anonymity so not just one person is sharing concerns.

● Provide access to a third party neutral mediation/facilitation service for handling disputes.
Initiate interactive and personal opportunities for staff to engage with and be heard by all levels of leadership.

Problem Statement:
Staff does not feel that they have adequate opportunity to interact with leadership, have their concerns and ideas heard and receive a response from them.

Narrative:
The Leadership Team would benefit from spending more time with staff to understand daily challenges. This would allow them first-hand knowledge of daily operations. The object is not to micromanage staff, but become aware of challenges and resource deficiencies and offer appreciation so that staff can be supported.

Selected Interview Quotes:
“Executive leadership is not accessible, ignores requests and is not approachable. They are rarely seen so there is little or no opportunity for personal interaction. Leadership sets the tone and their attitudes have impacts down the line.” (HS)

“The Chancellor rarely engages at HS and when she does come, it is not well known.” (HS)

“The Chancellor can leverage herself by doing more in person meetings. She is effective and genuine when responding to people in person. There is huge value when the Chancellor cares enough to come listen to a group rather than leading from an ivory tower.”

Action Steps:

- Continue Breakfast with the Chancellor program; offer similar small group formats for staff to meet with mid-level management as well.
- Offer interactive forums and town hall meetings on a regular basis. Ensure participants are given ample opportunity to dialogue with leadership as opposed to a one-way lecture format.
  - Hold a forum to engage staff in a dialogue on the results of the Communication survey and Focus Group findings to determine next steps to be taken by leadership and staff.
  - Staff desires more communication/information and updates on items that directly impact their jobs rather than events that are mainly global in nature.
  - Video tape the forums and offer as a webinar so staff can submit questions remotely.
● Offer brown bag events (not in auditoriums or large groups) with the Dean moving to various departments (on the service side as well as academic) to find out the issues of concern to staff, talking to the ‘boots on the ground folks.’

● Adopt *Management by Walking Around*: enhance leadership presence and approachability by informally walking around and speaking to staff at all levels to find out what is needed to ensure workplace effectiveness and employee satisfaction.
  
  ○ “Ask staff what our biggest challenges are, what impediments there are to doing our jobs. Show us you care by just asking us about our concerns.”

● Encourage supervisors to approve release time for these activities and events.

● **Establish a planned organization culture change**\(^1\)\(^2\) at UC Davis campus and Health System.

**Problem Statement:**

The focus group participants indicated that many of the issues raised on both campuses are systemic. The current culture at both campuses is seen as being hierarchical, top down, rigid and inflexible, with a ‘them and us’ mentality between faculty and staff/administration. Staff does not feel fully respected and valued for the contributions they provide.

**Narrative:**

We recognize that the goal of the focus groups was to delve deeper into communication issues raised by survey participants; however, in our view, communication is at the root of all issues raised by the focus groups.

Launching a cultural change program throughout UC Davis will require top leadership commitment, symbolic leadership and the support of organization changes at the individual, departmental and organizational level.

\(^1\) Organization culture here is defined as the pattern of basic assumptions, values, goals, beliefs, decision-making, norms, and artifacts shared by organization members. The shared meanings signal how work is to be done and evaluated, and how employees are to relate to each other and to significant others, such as customers, suppliers, students, patients, and government agencies. (Cummings and Worley)

\(^2\) Culture is the way people do things as they get on with the business of the organization. Organizational culture develops on the basis of people’s shared experience over time. (Stolovitch and Keeps)
**Action Steps:**

- Establish a Culture Change Steering Committee at the Executive level to determine the feasibility of a culture change project. Launching a program of this magnitude will require top leadership commitment and the support of an organizational change initiative.

- Select Organizational Development (OD) practitioners to work with the Steering Committee from concept to implementation, evaluation, and institutionalizing.
  - Determine internal resources that could be an integral part of the project, i.e. Administrative Reorganization and Transformation (ART), Human Resources, Staff Development & Professional Services, and Organizational Excellence.

- Select a Culture Change Project Lead to determine the scope of the project, resources needed, estimated time lines and, most importantly, the selection of stakeholders from all levels of the organization.

![An Approach to Culture Change](image)

**An Approach to Culture Change**

- **Adopt, Train to and Implement Best Practices in Institutional Procedures.**

**Problem Statement:**

There is not a universally shared understanding of UC Davis’ organizational policies and procedures. Effective tools and current information are not always accessible.
**Narrative:**

Policies and procedures are the lubricant that allows an organization to run smoothly. To support the operations of UC Davis, staff must have clear and understandable policies and procedures that are uniformly implemented across all departments and units. Conversely, policies must be flexible enough to accommodate unusual and emergency situations.

**Selected Interview Quotes:**

“I’ve had several jobs. There was no formal process on how to do the job; no initial training. There are no training manuals to learn even the basic necessities of the job.”

“The new system (Ecotime at HS) is too rigid. There are unusual events that occur and employees may need flexibility periodically and if given that flexibility, they are then more committed.”

**Action Steps:**

- The following should be updated, kept current and made available to all affected staff on a regular and timely basis:
  - Job descriptions and job training manuals; new employee on-boarding procedures; email lists and listservs; organizational charts; websites; position openings and who is leaving, who is promoted.
  - External department websites. This benefits students as well as staff.
    - Retire obsolete web pages/data sources.
  - Information from HR (identified as important by both staff and supervisors).
- Engage staff in updating and streamlining policies, preferably as part of cross-functional work teams. Policies are seen as policing the few who take advantage of the system – not making the system better for all.
- Create campus-wide best practices for sending and responding to emails. Practices should include:
  - A clear purpose and “call to action.” The communication should clearly state the purpose (e.g., information to be understood, advisory, changes to be implemented, etc.) and if a response is required.
  - Subject line clarity.
  - Sharing information – who and when individuals should be copied.
  - Brevity without sacrificing understanding.
  - Keep distribution lists current.
• Create Best Practices and protocols for effective meetings (topic areas to include notification, agendas, participant inclusion, meeting notes and distribution, and communication ground rules)

• Work with the Office of the Ombuds to create, train to and implement Best Practices and protocols for managing conflict. Interpersonal communication issues should be resolved at the lowest possible level and include the involved parties.

• Leadership/policy makers should confer with managers/supervisors and staff to evaluate the impact and efficacy of new systems. Consider staff feedback and needs for flexibility, adjusting the policy accordingly.
  o Empower managers to use their own discretion, while adhering to University policy, in responding to employee needs around flexible schedules (i.e., Ecotime system).

• Improve Individual Competencies (Leadership, Academics and Staff).

  Problem Statement:
  Faculty and staff with little or no experience or training in staff supervision, project management and other related skills areas lead many projects and manage staff. Participants indicated they did not know of any campus-wide leadership development programs for staff, faculty or administrators and no uniform approach to staff training or the use of Individual Development Plans (IDP’s).

  Narrative:
  A knowledgeable, skilled and well-trained workforce is critical to an organization’s success. Training should be provided to staff and management based on competency and performance gaps. While finding time to focus on employee development, in an environment that is already stretched to the limit is difficult, it is incumbent on all Leadership Team members to ensure their staff is adequately trained and have the tools to succeed. In the long-term, staff will be more productive and satisfied.

  Employee development needs to occur at all levels on both campuses, focusing on self-development, developing others, improving work processes and project management. All programs must be aligned with the University’s development plan and strategic plan. Employee development and leadership development programs will enhance individual performance levels.
**Action Steps: Project Management**

- Consider establishing a dedicated project management department.
- Provide leaders and staff who launch/lead projects with training in project management or insure that there is someone trained in project management on the team (see 7 step model below as a guide to project management).
  - Training should include how to involve the right people, collaborative problem solving, creating realistic timelines and budgets, and incorporating an adaptive management review cycle.

**A Model for Project Management**

**Action Steps: Training**

- Require those new to management and supervision to attend core competency courses.
- Conflict resolution and interpersonal skills training should be required of all leadership and staff. A campus protocol for dealing with conflict should be developed.
- Provide communication courses, covering written and oral communications, for mixed groups of staff and administration across functions.
- Create opportunities for back-up training, cross training and succession planning to cover sick leave, vacations and retirements.
- Educate all staff on what each Division, Department and Unit does
  - Initiate brown bag lunches to share, in an informal but structured format, what each Division or Department does on campus. The benefit will be an increased
knowledge of UC Davis’ operations and better cooperation and understanding amongst employees.

**Action Steps: Staff Development**

- After identifying the competencies needed to do each job, the manager/supervisor should facilitate the employee’s Individual Development Plan (IDP) based on the employee’s specific goals and development opportunities and job position needs.
- The manager/supervisor and employee should then create current and long-term goals for the employee’s job that includes specific time frames and measurement.
- Determine a policy to allocate a reasonable amount of release time for staff to attend development courses consistent with their IDP.
- The supervisor and the employee should monitor the employee’s progress on their IDP and revise semi-annually as needed.
- Consider piloting the development of employee development plans in one department; evaluate its success and sustainability and revise as needed before initiating the program in other departments/units.
Leadership development should be about putting people into mental situations that stretch their world view, test their mental models, challenge their assumptions, force them to grow and make them practice events that they may not regularly see in their job so that they are prepared for them should they even occur. - Peter Drucker

- Under the auspices of Human Resources, Organizational Excellence, ART, and Staff Development, design and develop a Leadership Development Program for managers and supervisors that is aligned with the University’s Mission. Some tools could include 360s (measurable characteristics of a person that are related to success at work), IDPs, learning and leadership styles, and emotional intelligence.

- Allow managers and supervisors to ‘intern’ or serve in a fellowship in a variety of areas, sponsored by a top-level executive. This allows the employee to become more aware of inner workings of the organization, to learn from others, and develop relationships that might be an integral part of their current or future career position.
  - Conduct 360 assessment reviews for managers and supervisors as a means of validating leadership competencies for success. The review should include performance measures on communication practices.
**ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**

**Introduction**

The UC Davis Staff Assembly engaged Sue Woods and Estell Jones (Consulting Team), to conduct focus groups with UC Davis staff from both the Davis campus and the UC Davis Health System. The purpose of the focus groups was to more deeply explore the communication issues and concerns raised in the Staff Assembly Communications Survey – and to determine a set of actionable recommendations, with the ultimate goal of improving communications at the UC Davis and Health System campuses.

**Project Background**

In 2012, the Council of University of California Staff Assemblies (CUCSA) conducted a Staff Engagement Survey. The goal was to understand the current state of employee engagement at UC Davis and identify opportunities to improve it.

As a follow-up to the 2012 Staff Engagement Survey, the UC Davis Staff Assembly conducted a survey from May 16 through June 6, 2014. The purpose of the 2014 survey was to provide specific actionable steps to campus leadership to address issues identified in the 2012 survey.

Responses to the 2014 survey were received from 244 individuals. The following results were reported in a UC Davis Staff Assembly Committee Report (see Appendix A).

- The 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 their effort is “useless.”

The purpose of these focus groups is to more deeply explore the communication issues and concerns raised in the Staff Assembly Communications Survey.
**Methodology**

Invitations to staff to participate in a focus group were placed in the *Staff Voice, Dateline, and The Insider* (Appendix B). A link to focus groups details and an application to participate were provided as part of the invitation. Focus groups were limited to a maximum of 10 individuals per group. To provide maximum neutrality and confidentiality, the final participant selection process was designed and conducted by the Consulting Team.

Three focus groups were conducted with UC Davis campus staff; two focus groups were conducted with UC Davis Health System staff. One of the focus groups on each campus was limited to supervisors and managers; the balance of the three focus groups were conducted with non-supervisory staff. Thirty-eight individuals participated in the focus groups. Respondents ranged in years of service from 2 years to 42 years. While the methodology of focus groups is not designed to provide a statistically valid survey sample, the groups interviewed represented a broad diversity of ethnicity and gender, as well as a cross-section of colleges, departments and units, job titles, and supervisors and non-supervisors.

With the assistance of the Client Team (Mr. Peter Blando, Ms. Dianne Gregory, Ms. Ahna Heller, Ms. Lina Layiktez, and Mr. Grant Nejedlo), the Consulting Team developed a questionnaire (Attachment C). The same questions were asked at each of the focus groups. Communication Guidelines / Ground rules were provided for each focus group (Appendix D.) All responses are confidential.

The assessment findings in this report are based on stakeholder input. Recommendations are based on a synthesis of stakeholder feedback, professional experience and best practices. A summary of the key findings and participant recommendations can be found in the following sections.
**Key Findings**

Key findings are based on information gained in the focus groups. Respondents were candid in their answers. This section summarizes what was heard and makes no interpretation or value judgments on the data collected.

**Methods that work well regarding receiving information from leadership**

Many interviewees agreed that UC Davis does a fairly good job on communicating big picture information. They cited the following examples:

- **Letters from the Chancellor.** Comments were made that the information is timely and that the Chancellor’s office has been more open to sharing information.
- **Breakfast with the Chancellor.** This opportunity was cited as a great way to learn more about UC Davis. Several staff commented that the Chancellor listens to staff and acts on ideas she’s heard. Those who attended the breakfasts encouraged all staff to apply for this opportunity.
- **Updates from Julie A. Freischlag, M.D., Vice Chancellor for Human Health Sciences and Dean of the School of Medicine.**
- **Ann Madden Rice’s (CEO, UC Davis Medical Center) daily updates.**
- **University of California, Office of the President (UCOP) communications.** Staff appreciates that the communications include a clear “call to action” that staff can respond to.
- **Dateline: UC Davis News and Information.** This was cited as an excellent vehicle to learn about staff and the various research programs. Several interviewees mentioned that Dateline has a good mix of news of campus-wide initiatives as well as kudos to faculty and staff for their accomplishments. A comment was made that Dateline should be sent to all staff and that staff should be encouraged to read it to keep current.
- **Division and Department meetings.** All hands meetings are the most useful. Notes are not taken at some meetings so staff is not always aware of what they missed. Posting PowerPoint presentations, video or notes of the meetings, if available, is most helpful for those who are unable to attend.
- **Office of Research: This source was cited as an effective communicator using both a newsletter and town hall meetings.**

Other vehicles of effective communication include:

- **The Insider webpage.** It was noted that this source is most effective when staff make The Insider their home page. Staff cited the summaries as particularly useful. While it’s regarded as a good tool to communicate information to staff, several respondents
expressed concern that not all staff have access to computers including maintenance staff, groundskeepers, lab techs, food service and shop workers.

- Friday UCDHS email blast with the top 5 or 6 items extracted from campus and Health System communications. The short summary with links to more information was noted as being beneficial.
- Staff Voice – newsletter of the UC Davis Staff Assembly.
- Warn Me – the emergency notification system.
- Citrix (School of Medicine).
- Emails – though some staff commented on the following issues:
  - Some emails are unnecessarily lengthy.
  - There doesn’t seem to be any consistency regarding who gets what information; the question was asked if the distribution lists are current?
  - There are so many emails from the University of California, UCOP, the Chancellor and individual departments - in addition to ordinary day-to-day business; it’s sometimes hard to keep up with them all.
- Department webpages. It was noted that not all departments have webpages. Webpages with current information and department org charts were considered to be most beneficial.
- Listservs dedicated to specific topics of interest.
- My UC Davis Portal.

Respondents agreed that the optimum circumstance is receiving information while there is time to provide input. One example cited was the furlough issue. UC Davis leadership solicited input, then implemented the suggestions. Staff also appreciates when the mission of an initiative is communicated. The tobacco free campus initiative was mentioned as a positive example.

**Ineffective communications**

The majority of ineffective communications focused on organizational communication at the department, work group and interpersonal levels. Comments included:

**Very little staff engagement**

- Communication is frequently one-way, from the top down.
- Decisions are often made without staff involvement. There is often no opportunity for staff to provide input or help leadership understand the impact of their demands/requests.

**Untimely communication**

- Projects, budgets and other changes that leadership has known about for a while are given to staff with short timeframes or unrealistic deadlines.
• Decisions affecting daily life are not communicated in a timely manner. Examples include: bi-weekly pay schedule, change in degree requirements for graduate students and the new reclassification/restructure of all job titles.
• Senior staff does not always communicate targeted information in a timely manner (e.g. a major move).

Information not shared consistently
• Department/Unit heads in some cases choose not to communicate information to staff.
• Information is withheld as a means of exercising power and control. There is a general feeling that information is restricted and on a “need-to-know” basis.
• Updates are not always communicated to all staff. A few interviewees commented that some staff are not invited to all staff meetings.
• Information is occasionally posted to a website before administrators are notified.
• Person-dependent information (primarily human resource information) is not always shared. It was thought that managers forget or neglect to inform the affected individuals.

Other comments included:
• Faculty who have no staff supervisory experience manage some departments and are not attuned to engaging staff in a collegial manner.
• Communication with staff is not a priority.
• There is too much siloed information on campus.
• Getting information on a particular subject from a variety of sources is sometimes confusing. Not every communicator has the same priorities and sense of what’s important.
• In the absence of information, individuals engage in informal conversations. These conversations are typically negative.

Specific examples of ineffective communication include:
• The smoking initiative. The guidelines are said to be unclear on where one can and cannot smoke. The lack of clarity makes it impossible to implement the smoking policy.
• Payroll and retirement: calls are not being returned or acknowledged.
• Surveys: There are lots of surveys but nothing ever seems to change. Staff would like to see the results of the surveys – and management’s response to the issues that were raised.
• A bulletin board was created with a topic of the week. Staff was encouraged to post comments using sticky notes. While the communication goal was laudable, the vehicle was deemed ineffective.
• The One UC Davis initiative is not being embraced at the UC Davis Health System.
Thank Goodness for Staff (TGFS) does not achieve the desired outcome when the leadership is not visible, staff is not acknowledged and the impacts on staff (i.e., parking at the Health System) are not mitigated.

Anthem Blue Cross computer hack. Not enough info given to affected parties.

**Improvements Suggested by Focus Group Participants**

Staff is passionate about making UC Davis a premier workplace. Staff wants to work with executive leadership, department chairs, managers and supervisors to improve communications at all levels. The following ideas were offered:

**Leadership**

- Leadership should be open and transparent. When discussing a new initiative, program or procedure, acknowledge and describe the impacts in detail. The current campus culture seems to fear acknowledging anything negative.
- One of the most important jobs that leadership can do is to listen – and respond. Suggestions frequently go unheeded leaving staff to believe that leadership doesn’t care.
- If input is solicited, ask for it before the decision is made. If not, communication is viewed as window-dressing and inauthentic.
- Find out what issues are important to staff and acknowledge topics that staff cares about.
- Acknowledge all staff contributions.
- All levels of leadership should be required to take leadership and communications training. The purpose would be to restructure the management style to be more inclusive and develop better communications between staff and leadership including oral, email and written communication. The training would be most effective if trainees worked on actual problems that have occurred in the work place. Several suggested a “servant leadership” approach to leading.
- Provide project management training to those responsible for managing projects. The training should include how to involve the right people, collaborative problem solving, creating realistic timelines and budgets, and incorporating an adaptive management review cycle.
- Create a process to escalate concerns and/or disagreement to higher levels of leadership. The process should be non-threatening to either party.
- Focus group participants also asked what leadership would like to hear from staff.

**Inclusion**

- Staff wants to participate and feel included. There is currently an “us” and “them” mentality separating staff and leadership.
- Engage staff in collaborative problem solving. When decisions are already made, it’s difficult to reverse them. Staff is the one required to implement changes that sometimes don’t work. Staff has a lot of experience that could help refine a process and make it successful.
- Let staff know what committees and subcommittees exist to tackle what issues – and how staff can become involved in committees to help develop solutions.
- Many interviewees commented that they want updates on projects and initiatives, even if only to say there is nothing new to report.
- Include staff in department meetings.
- All managers should have an Open Door policy to receive input and ideas.
- Many interviewees commented that they appreciated the opportunity to participate in these focus groups – and would like to see leadership offer more focus groups on other issues and topics.

Management
- Individual managers should be given more flexibility to implement procedures and manage staff. The current rigid system restricts manager’s ability to allow flexibility in work scheduling.
- Managers should engage in MBWA (Management by Walking Around) to see how operations really work. They would have the opportunity to acknowledge good work, see impediments first hand and engage staff in a dialogue about their concerns.
- Better communication is needed between unit leadership.
- Become more proactive by reaching out to staff in various units that would benefit from effectiveness and efficiency. The Administrative Reorganization and Transformation (ART) effort is a small start. ART is designed to facilitate collaboration across department lines to determine optimal administrative organization and best practices to advance the teaching, research and outreach missions of UC Davis.
- Create a Chief Information Officer in each department. This person would be responsible for sharing information.
- Incentivize suggestions at the unit and department level – not just campus-wide.

Communication Channels
- Because many people are doing multiple jobs, create matrix-like communication channels to replace current hierarchical channels.
- Create listservs where individuals can subscribe to topics they are interested in.
- Use the ZITE site to allow staff to customize their own website to receive desired information.
- More cross-topic communication would be valuable.
- Use Reddit – a forum where individuals can vote ideas up/down. Include an interactive feed where people can provide input.
- Create a public forum for staff to post ideas. Include an opportunity for leadership to comment on what has been posted.
• Create a communication vehicle like Dateline or UCD Path where important announcements are posted and staff knows they can go to this media outlet to get more detailed information.
• Create an online anonymous feedback system for staff to provide comments without fear of retaliation.
• Create a staff newspaper similar to The Aggie. Include room for editorials. Allow writers and editors freedom from retaliation.
• Convene town hall meetings for initiatives that more directly impact staff – in addition to the current town hall meetings convened to communicate large scale initiatives such as the One UC Davis plan. The staff town hall meetings should include an opportunity for dialogue between staff and leadership.
• General questions could be responded to with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted to the UC Davis website. An example was: How long will Freeborn Hall be closed?

News that staff would like to receive – and how

Staff commented on the news that they would prefer to receive as follows:
• Things that affect staff's job including:
  o Information on what other units, departments and divisions do,
  o How decisions are made,
  o Job specific information such as Instructor of Record changes, and
• Human Resource (HR) updates: it would be helpful if they were flagged separately from general news.
• Safety issues.
• Personnel information such as:
  o Awards and recognitions,
  o Promotions, and retirements, and
  o Job openings.
• Major changes that affect all staff and faculty including career tracks, organizational changes and change management, terms and conditions of employment, HR issues, succession planning, health care, retirement and budget information.

Information was said to be best communicated by:
• Email
  o Need to encourage subject line clarity,
  o Provide training on best practices for writing and sending emails.
• Searchable documents
• Other media including Reddit, Twitter, etc.
• Chancellor Town Hall meetings
• Creation of listservs where individuals can subscribe to topics they are interested in. Staff can subscribe and then receive alerts/feeds as new items are available.
Concerns were raised at all focus groups about staff that do not have access to computers such as maintenance staff, groundskeepers, lab techs, food service and shop workers. It is imperative that alternate information distribution avenues are identified so all staff receive news in a timely manner.

**Responding to ideas and concerns**

When concerns or ideas are submitted to leadership, staff would like:

- Acknowledgement of receipt of input within a week – unless it’s a harassment complaint that needs immediate response.
  - Let the sender know what the next steps are.
  - Provide frequent status updates.
  - Let the sender know if the concern was addressed or the idea implemented – or why not.
- Don’t respond by ignoring or dismissing the suggestion – or retaliating. Several examples of retaliation were cited when staff went over their supervisor’s head with a suggestion or concern.

**Communicating sensitive or critical issues to leadership**

Many comments were received on this topic. There was general agreement that there is a strict chain of command acculturated at UC Davis. Fear of retaliation was a prominent issue. The following comments were recorded:

- Some supervisors are responsive to concerns; some are not.
- Retaliation is a big issue.
  - Suggestions are sometimes viewed as complaints.
  - “Complainers” risk getting bad performance reviews.
  - If staff go over their supervisor’s head, they are ostracized.

Staff reported they communicate sensitive or critical issues by:

- Using tact and diplomacy.
- Having someone outside one’s unit or from another campus communicate the issue to management.
- Using executives at Staff Assembly to pass along information to the right party.
- Using the Office of the Ombuds.
- Utilizing a third party off-campus vendor to communicate the issue.
- Using the state’s whistle-blower process – though many concerns don’t rise to this level.

Suggestions to improve the process include:

- Creation of an anonymous system to submit concerns.
- Creation of an Ombuds for each department.
● Creation of a forum for combining input so not just one person is sharing concerns.

Staff also commented on communicating other issues to management. They expressed frustration because:

● Frequently nothing happens – whether it’s regarding a small matter like replacing lights at the Health System parking structures so staff feel safe – or a more pervasive issue like inadequate signage at the Health System that contribute to patients and visitors getting lost.

● Staff is not always clear about where to submit concerns and suggestions. Currently it is perceived that Health System staff must provide their cost center or account number for their complaint to be acted upon. Thus it is perceived that their own office could be billed for the problem even if the problem is in another area.

● There is little information on how to submit general complaints. Some staff reported they have given up reporting maintenance issues.

● There is a concern that leadership is reluctant to share too much information because they fear that chaos will ensue. There was agreement that in the absence of information, people make it up – seldom positively.

**Important topics to communicate to leadership**

Staff would like leadership to know:

● How things really operate.

● Staff successes and accomplishments.

● How decisions impact/affect staff.

● Staff would like the opportunity to provide feedback before decisions are made or initiatives are fully developed.

● That acknowledgement of communication of concerns and ideas is important.

● If suggestions are not taken, share the “why” of the decision. Staff does not expect every suggestion to be adopted but do want to feel heard.

● Where there is waste and inefficiencies in the system – and suggest cost-saving measures to alleviate the wastefulness.

● Issues that affect individual departments and campuses (e.g., Tahoe and snow days.)

● Open and honest communication is important. Everything doesn’t need to have a positive spin.

● There is a need for a review system:
  
  o Many policies are old and outdated.
  
  o Not all new initiatives are meeting their objectives.

● Staff wants to be a part of the success of UC Davis but several commented that they no longer offer suggestions because their input is ignored, nothing changes or they suffer negative consequences.
• Policies are seen as policing the few who take advantage of the system – not making the system better for all. There seems to be more and more policies and procedures. There is a need to streamline policies.

• The Principles of Community are seldom discussed except when someone is being reprimanded. The principles are used as a punitive tool.

• Staff does not feel valued when there is such a disparity of services. There is a general feeling that rank hath its privilege – as evidenced by a higher standard of services, and quality of events and amenities provided to administration.

**One change to improve communications**

Interviewees were asked: “Imagine you are in charge and can make one change to improve communications at UC Davis – what would you change?” The following suggestions were offered:

• Collaborative problem solving instead of hierarchical top-down decision-making. Obtain input from staff that will be impacted by the change and/or are responsible for implementing the change.

• Acknowledgement and recognition of staff – both peer recognition and supervisor recognition.

• Create a culture of openness and transparency that values honest and legitimate information.

• Every committee formed must produce a work product report which would be made easily available to all staff.

• Share information as early as possible. Keep staff updated.

• Encourage more staff interaction across departments. Personal relationships become productive working relationships.

• Reduce the segregation between faculty and staff. Include faculty in TGFS.

• Create opportunities for back-up training, cross training and succession planning to cover sick leave, vacations and retirements.

• Protect those who speak up from retaliation. Create rules of engagement to allow safe communication.

• Require leadership training for all individuals in positions of leadership including academics promoted to Administration or Department Chairs.

• Respond to the communication of issues, concerns and ideas. Acknowledge receipt and provide periodic updates.

• Provide every employee with a UC Davis email address so they can receive campus communications.

• Encourage more dialogue by holding regular brown bag events in different departments to share what the department is doing. The event should be attended by the Dean who engages staff in a discussion of issues and concerns.
● Create a safe forum for managers and supervisors to have the opportunity to explore issues that must be explained to staff.
● Require 360 evaluations for managers to allow feedback from staff.
● Foster innovation and creativity across departments.
● Learn from other campuses and organizations. Staff doesn’t always have to reinvent the wheel.
● Implement a “Day in somebody else’s shoes” to gain different perspectives.
● Require “Management by Walking Around.” Leadership needs to talk to staff.
● Human Resources, not supervisors, should conduct exit interviews.
● Staff needs to take responsibility for being part of the change. You can’t complain about the situation if you’re not willing to be part of the solution.
The topic for the survey and the focus groups was communications. Effective communication is a function of organizational design. Staff wishes to have a voice and feel like active participants in campus and Health System operations. They want to be recognized for the good job they do and valued as productive team members who contribute to the success of UC Davis.

Staff does not believe, for the most part, that they are fully informed of campus initiatives, policies and other programs that impact their jobs and daily lives. Information is frequently not distributed in a timely manner. Staff also reports they are seldom included in the decision-making process at the department or campus level. Those impacted by changes are required to implement the changes but are not generally consulted in the development of the initiatives. Staff typically has valuable experience that could contribute to the successful development and implementation of changes. They recognize that not every suggestion will be taken, but they believe they have input worth considering. Once implemented, there appears to be no formal feedback loop to assess the efficacy of a change.

There is a wide divide between faculty and staff/administration. Staff believes their suggestions for innovation are not valued and that seniority is more highly valued than experience. For that reason, the recommendations include changes to more than just communication channels.
CONCLUSION

There are no magic bullets, quick fixes, management programs or employee trainings that will immediately resolve all the issues outlined in this report. It will require a commitment from leadership to the guiding principles and values of open communication, honest feedback, inclusive decision-making and staff recognition to achieve a more cooperative, collegial and professional working environment. Equally, staff must commit to engaging with leadership to improve the work environment.

It should be noted that timely communications, recognition, respect and inclusion do not require a campus-wide initiative or a budget increase. They do require that leadership become more collaborative. But the collaboration must be authentic and incorporated into campus culture. Anything less will be perceived as insincere. The payoff will be huge – engaged staff, job satisfaction and better solutions that are more broadly supported and effectively implemented.
APPENDIX A: 2014 SURVEY RESULTS

Committee on Campus-wide Communications

Peter Blando, Chair
Business Services Manager
Office of the Vice Provost, Information and Educational Technology

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.
APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP INVITATION

The initial call for applicants was published in the Staff Voice on January 23, 2015.

From the Chair
Focus groups on campus communications

Apply today and help improve “top down” and “bottom up” communications

Staff Assembly’s Committee on Campus-wide Communications is holding five focus groups at the Sacramento and Davis campuses. The purpose of the focus groups is to start a dialogue with staff and generate recommendations that the Chancellor and other campus administrators can consider to improve communications at UC Davis. Fifty staff members will be selected to participate to share their thoughts and opinions in small groups facilitated by independent, third-party facilitators.

“I’m looking forward to receiving the recommendations from the focus groups and hearing staff perspectives on communications on campus and at the health system,” says Chancellor Katehi. “I encourage staff to apply to attend a session and share their valuable insights, and I encourage supervisors to grant their team members the time and flexibility to participate.”

The work of Staff Assembly’s Campus-wide Communications Committee stems from a 2012 Staff Engagement Survey that identified issues regarding how "top down" and "bottom up" communications are handled across campus. More information on the survey and the committee can be found on the Staff Assembly website.

The two-hour focus groups are scheduled for dates in late March and early April. Ten staff members will be asked to participate in each group and those chosen will receive an invitation three weeks before the event. Release time, with supervisory approval, is appropriate for this event.

If you’re interested in sharing your thoughts and suggestions about communications on the Davis campus and field stations, please complete our brief Google Form by 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 20. Your responses in the Google form and interest in participating will only be shared with select committee
Your perspectives, experiences and suggestions are important to Staff Assembly and the Chancellor. We hope you will consider this opportunity to have a voice in the decisions that matter to you. Any questions can be directed to the campus communications committee chair, Peter Blando, at pgblando@ucdavis.edu.

Lina C. Layiktez  
Chair, UC Davis Staff Assembly  
staffvoice@ucdavis.edu
APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Engagement Questions*
UC Davis Staff Assembly Focus Groups

In a few words, tell us what drew you to attend this focus group on communication today?

1. What works well at UC Davis with regard to receiving information from leadership about change and initiatives?
2. Can you describe a time when you experienced an ineffective communication in your workplace regarding receiving important information from leadership?
3. In what ways could there be an improvement on how important information can be communicated to staff from leadership?
4. What kinds of news/information would you like to receive?
   a. How would you like to receive it?
   b. How often would you like it delivered?
5. If you submitted an idea or concern to leadership, how would you like to see your idea or concern acknowledged, and in what time frame?
6. If you had an idea that might be sensitive or critical of how things run, how could you communicate your concerns to leadership without feeling like your message would cause problems for you?
7. What kinds of things are important to you to communicate to the highest levels of leadership (Assistant Dean, Dean/Vice Chancellor, Provost, or Chancellor)? How would you do it?
8. Imagine you are in charge and can make one change to improve communication at UC Davis - what would you change?

*The purpose of these questions is to start a dialogue with staff and generate recommendations that the Chancellor and other campus administrators can consider to improve communications at UC Davis.

These questions were developed through collaboration with the Staff Assembly Communications Committee and Estell Jones and Sue Woods, external facilitators for the focus groups.

Records of information that you provide for the focus group and any other personal information or responses you provide during the focus group session will not be linked in any way. The final report will have no name attributions or list of participants. Your participation is strictly confidential. Thank you for your interest and participation!
APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINES

FOCUS GROUP

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

Group agreements to guide our conversation:

1. Use common conversational courtesy
2. All ideas & points of view have value-agreement unnecessary
3. One voice at a time
4. Share the air-be conscious of time limits
5. Every voice is heard
6. Be solution oriented
7. Listen with an open mind & explore ideas
8. Silence your electronics
9. Humor is welcome
10. Be comfortable
APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP CROSS COMPARISONS

The following tables summarize the responses from the Supervisors/Manager’s focus groups and the non-manager’s focus groups. Issues identified by Supervisors and Managers are presented in tables with blue headings; issues identified by non-supervisors are presented in tables with gold headings. Within each group, issues are separated to identify those common to each group and those unique to one campus or the other.

**Supervisor/Manager Focus Groups at UCDHS and Davis Campus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues COMMON to Supervisors/Managers at both UCDHS and Davis Campus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Lack of staff involvement and input into decisions about new initiatives, policies, and planning</td>
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<td>● Concerns/fear of retaliation and repercussions if one goes outside the chain of command with critiques</td>
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<td>● Low / negative morale</td>
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<td>● Desire for more leadership visibility and interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Desire for more communication/information and updates on items that directly impact staff jobs;</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Forums and town halls are too global in nature-want an agenda with information that impacts employees.</td>
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<td>○ Lack of access to computers to obtain UC Davis communications by staff who do not have desk jobs (groundskeepers, maintenance, housekeeping, food service, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Lack of information about where to go to get concerns heard and addressed</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Lack of response / feedback to ideas and concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ No response to or results from surveys-nothing changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Information management: time consuming nature of synthesizing and extracting the most relevant information for staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Institutional procedures: Need for best practices for emails, updating policies, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues raised by Supervisors/Managers at UCDHS ONLY</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>● There is a staff vs leadership and a hospital vs medical school mentality and a strict hierarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Executive leadership is inaccessible, ignores requests, not approachable, no way to communicate with, rarely sees; sets the tone and attitude has impacts down the line.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o “There is no engagement (by leadership) at all here with staff.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Lack of responsiveness within system</td>
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<tr>
<td>o “We communicate over and over again with no response.” “I write emails and get absolutely no response.” “Calls and email are not returned or acknowledged. Getting simple problems resolved is very hard”</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Safety issues: lights out in parking structures; want to be kept more informed on events that affect personal safety (bomb threats, dangerous persons, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>o ‘When I leave late at night it is dark; this is a safety issue. Do I need to be assaulted to get lights fixed? I’ve spoken to them on multiple occasions to no avail, nothing happens, no response.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Lack of signage at HS:</td>
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<tr>
<td>o “This is about communication to patients. There are many lost patients wandering around; people go around in circles. People with breathing problems are lost and can’t find where they need to be. All of us in this room have told someone about this problem and there is no acknowledgment or correction to this problem. This experience will not give HS a good patient satisfaction rating.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Staff often gives up reporting repair/maintenance services needed-system complicated to report and reporter perceives that their department will be billed when problem exists elsewhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Lack of recognition and appreciation for staff and public acknowledgement of their accomplishment</td>
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<tr>
<td>● TGFS: creates huge parking problems and no acknowledgment of staff at event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Managers desire flexibility around work scheduling with staff-new system (Ecotime) is too rigid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Need to go to both Davis campus and HS newsletters and websites for enough information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Mainly one way communication at forums/town halls, need 2 way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Disparity in treatment of leadership and non-leadership groups (cleanliness of areas/bathrooms and frequency of housekeeping, quality of food served at events)

• Need for 360’s on management

(Consultants Note: There seems to be a high degree of frustration and hopelessness with the lack of responsiveness at Health System)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues raised by Supervisors/Managers at Davis Campus ONLY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Faculty and others are promoted to the role of manager without training to manage</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Faculty are protected-why complain about them as nothing will happen</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Appears to be no way to provide anonymous feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Desire information on committees being formed and how the members are chosen</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Managers/supervisors don’t want to look bad when they don’t have details of initiatives that impact their own staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transparency-tell people as information becomes available</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Issues COMMON to Non-Supervisor Groups at both UCDHS and Davis Campus

- Lack of staff involvement and input in to decisions and new initiatives, policies, planning
  - *Seek our input, follow-up on our ideas*

- Let staff know what decisions have been made, when they are made and how they will impact staff and their jobs

- Transparency/air of secrecy: There is a feeling that management is withholding or hiding information from staff, not sharing important information that affects their jobs and daily lives; that information is shared selectively and not consistently.
  - *Staff want information shared with all affected parties as it becomes known*

- Concerns/fear of retaliation and repercussions if one goes outside the chain of command with critiques

- Desire for more visibility by leadership and more opportunities for two-way interaction with leadership

- Staff members who do not have computer access (groundskeepers, plant operations, shop workers, housekeeping, food service, etc.) have difficulty obtaining UC Davis communications.

- Need for cross-topic communication and cross-functional teams, and information exchange across UC campuses

- Information management: desire to have feeds of information on topics of individual choice and community type forums, by topic that leaders respond to regularly.

- Desire for more communication/information and updates on items that directly impact staff jobs;

- Institutional procedures: Establish best practices for emails, meetings, updating and creation of websites and org charts, job training manuals, etc.

- Management competencies: mandatory training in management/administration and communication for those promoted to the position with no prior experience (professors given an administrative role especially cited)
### Issues Specific to Non-Supervisor Groups at UCDHS ONLY

- Frustration with lack of response to emails/requests; lack of follow up on staff surveys
- Acknowledge and listen to staff, celebrate their achievements, move their positive accomplishments upward
- Lack of project management skills and project management training
- Principles of Community used as a punitive tool
- Information desired regarding open positions, promotions, who is leaving

### Issues Specific to Non-Supervisor Groups at Davis Campus ONLY

- Disrespect of staff and divide/segregation between faculty/staff
- Incentivize suggestions at the department/unit levels as well as campus-wide
- Outdated IT systems and technology
- Need to know where to go to get problems ‘fixed’
- Un-silo: Create collegiality and social opportunities with release time for staff to attend
- Information and communication:
  - Want multiple sources of information, a multi pronged approach, “One size does not fit all.”
  - Give information that is less abstract and more information that impacts us and our jobs directly
  - Want to hear more from middle management
  - Publicize formation and existence of committees, their purpose and recommendations
  - Desire to comment on and evaluate past initiatives
  - Desire to have an independent staff newsletter or forum and staff Twitter
<table>
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<th>Issues Specific to Non-Supervisor Groups at Davis Campus ONLY</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Institutional procedures needed: orientations for new staff, HR to conduct exit interviews – not only supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Conflict resolution processes/best practices needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Desire for more focus groups on diverse topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ “This is the best experience in communication I’ve had and some of the most meaningful sharing of ideas today that I’ve ever experienced on campus. I felt lucky to be part of this.”</td>
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