Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

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Striving for Excellence: Organizational Climate Matters

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Abstract

Objective – To describe steps undertaken by the University of Connecticut Libraries to respond to the results of an organizational climate assessment. More than 80% of the Libraries' staff members completed the ClimateQUAL® survey instrument in the spring of 2007. An organizational development consultant designed a format for focus groups to provide anonymous, but more detailed, experience-based information to help the Libraries discover, understand, and respond to the root causes of "problem" areas indicated by the survey results.

Methods – In November 2007, the consultant conducted five 90-minute, on-site focus group sessions, each with 7-15 participants. Two of the sessions were open to all staff

members, while the others focused on underrepresented minority group members, team leaders, and the staff of one specific team.

Results – A summary report based on compiled data and including recommendations was submitted and discussed with the Libraries' Leadership Group. In line with organizational development practice, recommendations were made to engage those closest to the "problems" (i.e., the staff) to design and recommend improvements to internal systems. The consultant advised the formation of six teams to address internal systems, and an initial three teams comprised of staff members from across the library were formed. These teams were charged with formulating a set of recommended actions that will contribute to a healthier organizational climate in three areas: leadership and team decision making; performance management; and hiring, merit, and promotion. The findings, recommendations, and progress-to-date of each team are summarized.

Conclusion – The ClimateQUAL® results and the follow-up with the organizational development consultant helped in identifying potential problem areas within the Libraries' internal systems. The consultant made recommendations that led to the development of concrete roadmaps, benchmarks, and associated strategies. The Libraries' progress on its strategic plan will serve as the barometer for gauging the effect of these changes.

Introduction

The University of Connecticut (UConn) Libraries began doing organizational climate assessments in 1999 with the original intent of measuring whether articulated organizational values were achieved following a library-wide reorganization in 1996. The UConn Libraries' original organizational climate assessment was influenced by the Balanced Scorecard approach (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). The Balanced Scorecard is one of the more recent multidimensional approaches to organizational assessment. Earlier, among others, Georgopolous and Tannebaum (1957) cited multiple effectiveness measures, Kanter and Brinkerhoff (1981) researched the topic, and Cameron (1978) published multidimensional organizational assessment literature specifically related to higher education.

The UConn Libraries' organizational assessment was directly influenced by the Learning and Growth component of the Balanced Scorecard's Vision and Strategy Process that asked "to achieve our vision, how will we sustain our ability to change and improve?" The other three Balanced Scorecard processes were addressed by the Libraries through user satisfaction studies, a statistical data information system, and a workflow study.

Eighteen assessment criteria for the Libraries' reorganization and fifteen assessment criteria for the seven newly created functional areas had been developed by the Libraries, mostly in response to concerns voiced by staff during the 1995 strategic planning and 1996 reorganization processes. In 1999, three years after the reorganization into functional areas and teams was completed, the Libraries conducted its first organizational climate assessment using a staff survey based on articulated measures of success including:

- Empowering staff with respect to operational responsibilities;
- Reflecting shared leadership and mutual respect among the staff;

- Displaying strong inter-area cooperation;
- Fostering good communications throughout the Libraries;
- Making the decision-making structure clear to staff; and
- Showing consideration for individual differences.

An organizational development (OD) consultant followed up on issues raised in the staff survey and outlined a number of actions that the Libraries subsequently pursued, including: team training, staff interactions (e.g., developing good communication skills and, mutual respect, understanding how mental models and the ladder of inference contribute to positive problem solving), leadership development training, employee recognition and rewards, improved communication by opening Leadership Council meetings to library staff, and implementing a more open process in developing the Libraries' periodic strategic plan/shared vision updates.

The 1999 organizational assessment was repeated in 2002 and 2005. The overall average score measuring the Libraries success in achieving organizational values increased by 4.5% between 1999 and 2002 and by 5% between 2002 and 2005. The overall average score at the functional area level increased by 3.7% between 1999 and 2002 and by 2.9% between 2002 and 2005. Beginning in 2002, the Libraries sponsored a library-wide annual "day of learning" in part to address issues like organizational boundaries, the value of teamwork, and managing change. Simultaneously, between 1996 and 2006, the Libraries' average user satisfaction improved by 12% and between 2000 and 2008 the Libraries LibQUAL+® satisfaction results improved by 5%.

Although the UConn Libraries experience with organizational assessment studies was valuable, it was not based on a standardized instrument like the Litwin and Stringer Organization Climate Questionnaire which was developed in Harvard University's Graduate School of Business Administration Research Division in the 1960s and was based on nine *a priori* scales: structure; responsibility; reward; risk; warmth; support; standards; conflict; and identity (Sims & LaFollette, 1975).

In so far as the UConn Libraries initially used an instrument that was not developed in conjunction with other libraries, the Libraries were enthusiastic about participating in the first group of ARL Libraries to pilot the Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment (OCDA) methodology in 2007. Soon to become ClimateQUAL® (http://www.climatequal.org/), the survey methodology was developed by Paul Hanges in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program at the University of Maryland in conjunction with the University of Maryland Libraries beginning in 2000. The key organizational climate concepts that OCDA assessed in 2007 were: climate for diversity; climate for continuous learning; climate for innovation; climate for justice/fairness; job satisfaction; and team climate as they related to customer service. OCDA also assessed whether library policies, practices, and procedures were effectively supporting the library's mission as well as employee's perceptions of what behaviors were expected, supported and rewarded.

More than 80% of the Libraries' staff completed the OCDA survey instrument in the spring of 2007. When the summary draft findings were presented to the library staff at its 2007 Fall Forum, it was clear that the Libraries needed assistance in determining how to interpret and respond to the survey results. This became even more evident when the qualitative results, based on open-ended staff comments, were made available several months later. The UConn Libraries engaged one of the same organizational development consultants who had assisted the Libraries with its earlier organizational climate assessments. This consultant had also gained considerable trust

and credibility with the library staff through her earlier work.

Consultant's Design/Methodology/Approach

The consultant designed a format for focus groups to provide anonymous but more detailed, experience-based information, which helped the Libraries discover, understand and appropriately respond to the root causes of "problem" areas indicated in the ClimateQUAL® Survey. A summary report based on compiled data and including recommendations was submitted and discussed with the Libraries' Leadership Group. Assisting that group in understanding that problems were embedded in the Libraries' systems, policies or practices, and should be divorced from "personal blame" was an important part of the "helping" role of the consultant. In line with organizational development practice, recommendations were made to engage those closest to the "problems," the staff, in designing and recommending improvements to internal systems.

Background and Preparation for the Consultation

To begin this latest assignment to help the UConn Libraries achieve their organizational goals, the consultant read and re-read the rich but complex data description of climate factors and analysis provided to the UConn Libraries by the OCDA staff. Also, to get a picture from a different set of data of issues present in the environment as the staff completed the OCDA survey, she studied other consultant reports which had recently been submitted to the Libraries, and inquired about follow-up to each. She also examined the 2007 Strategic Plan and its updates.

After interviews with the Director and the Libraries organizational and staff development librarian, the consultant determined that a) there was serious interest in understanding how climate factors were affecting the staff's trust and commitment to the organization, and b) that there was a genuine commitment to implement systems changes to improve the climate. There was willingness as well to embrace the yet to be proven concept that there was a direct correlation between staff perceptions of climate and customers' perceptions of quality service (Kyrillidou & Baughman, 2009). As has been described, UConn has one of the longest surviving team-based organizations, with an embedded history of staff empowerment, a clear value to support diversity, and an overt commitment to continuous learning and improvement. It is worth noting that they were in a minority of the OCDA test group participants who, almost immediately, shared the results of the survey with their staff on an all staff website and held an all staff meeting to discuss results.

The specific assignment of the consultant was to:

- conduct focus groups on all climate factors of the survey that indicated a strong need for improvement – as indicated by less than 50% agreement on a particular factor;
- summarize, analyze, and report the focus group results to the Leadership Council; and
- advise on next steps.

Conducting the Focus Groups: Selecting Participants

In November 2007, six months after the administration of the survey, the organizational and staff development librarian invited staff to attend 1 of 5 90-minute, on-site focus groups. A general invitation went to all staff to attend one of two "mixed staff sessions" and to the entire staff of one specific team and all underrepresented minority groups, where a significant difference in team/group responses was noted when compared to the overall Libraries responses to specific climate factors in the *OCDA Report*. A fifth focus group was held with the Team Leaders to round out the "view"

and learn more about probable causes. Anywhere from 7-15 participants attended each focus group session.

Believing that confidentiality was not an issue, a list was kept of the attendees. This later proved slightly problematic, since those attending first agreed to *verbatim* summaries, but withdrew that agreement when they saw the summarized transcripts, even though all personal identification had been excluded from the summaries. This experience matched the consultant's experience that although staff want to feel that their actual thoughts, as expressed, would be the most helpful to those in power, there is a prevalent reluctance to believe, in the end when one sees honest expressions of concerns, that there is no possibility of negative personal consequences. This dilemma was averted by having the consultant further summarize and abstract and, where possible, generalize the feedback from the groups, submit the summaries to the group for their approval, and further edit the final summaries appended to the Final Report.

Conducting the Focus Groups: Approach

In a previously published article (Phipps, 2004) the consultant had detailed the importance of looking at systems to discover causes of climate problems. This approach provided a conceptual framework to further analyze the climate factors included in the OCDA Survey. Each factor in the survey can be seen as evaluating the success or failure of an organizational system (i.e., Distributive Justice encompassed the systems of Performance Management and Rewards). Thus questions for the focus groups were designed to enable the mapping of results to particular system improvements that might be called for.

Root Cause Analysis as embraced by Dean Gano (1999) was the best "question" methodology to use in the focus groups in order to distinguish between possible *system* causes (called "conditions" in Gano's book) and *event-driven* causes. Each session began with a reminder of the purpose of the OCDA Survey and a description of the Climate Factor(s) for which input was being sought. Agreement on ground rules for the session, including one on confidentiality, was sought before proceeding with the questions. The consultant took relatively "verbatim" notes on posted chart paper and reviewed those notes with the individuals providing the comment and with the whole group prior to ending the session. (Although this is not the formally recommended way to track focus group input, it was done to save the time of transcribing audio tapes and helped the consultant gain a better understanding of issues referenced by the group.)

Using Gano's approach, each group was asked to think of an *event* (something that happened in the Libraries prior to the administration of the survey in May) or a *condition* (the way things worked, what policies and procedures were in place or how they were implemented, the culture in the Libraries or a Team) which might have contributed to the 50% disagreement with the positive statement of the climate factor in the survey. Using this approach, it would be possible to distinguish between past *events*, which were beyond the Libraries' control to "change" and *conditions or systems* which were amenable to change in order to positively affect the climate. Causal *events* were not dismissed as unimportant, but were noted and recommendations made for becoming aware of their impact. Such events could be acknowledged openly as "mistaken" or "naïve," clarified or given further context, and avoided in the future in order to avert a negative consequence on climate.

Conduct of the Focus Groups: Reports

After completing drafts, gaining feedback, re-writing summaries and gaining the agreement of the focus groups to share the summaries with the organizational and staff development librarian and the Vice Provost for Libraries, a draft Final Report with Appended Focus Group

Summaries was submitted. The Final Report outline was as follows:

- Background
- Process
- Identification of categories (Climate Factors) which were discussed in the focus groups
- Summary recommendations
- Appendix: mixed staff (combined summary from the two groups), underrepresented minorities, staff from one team; Team Leaders' separate reports, including analysis of themes and summary recommendations for each.

Summary Recommendations

Follow-Up Approach

Because the UConn Libraries is a team-based learning organization committed to organizational development strategies, it was recommended that all change efforts include substantial involvement of the staff. Best practice recommended including the staff in further research, since only two data sets (the Survey Results Report and the Consultant's Report) existed. Staff involvement can point the way to substantial and successfully implemented changes that can lead to actual culture change. Since results of the survey indicated a gap between understandings of the staff and perceptions of the administration and a significant amount of time had passed and many changes had already been implemented since the original survey administration, the appointment of staff teams would reinforce the commitment to shared leadership, the development of organizational competencies, and the collaborative spirit needed for future success of the Libraries in this environment of constant change. As organizational development practice has shown, staff understanding of issues and involvement in addressing them, can increase the effectiveness of planned actions and contribute to overall cost-efficiency.

Overall Strategic Understanding

The Libraries had already begun a new Strategic Planning process in April/May 2007 which included a review of "Staffing to Vision and Plan 2010," which was originally developed in October 2006 by the planning group and administrators, and a retreat of 45 staff members to review and understand staffing needs and develop areas of *emphasis* and *de-emphasis* for the future. A new retreat was planned to begin the 2015 Strategic Plan. The consultant recommended moving deliberatively forward on this approach, continuing broad and deep communications and using several methods for learning about the environment and customers' changing needs.

Focused Climate Improvements

Based on her expanded view of the results and interpretations of the OCDA Survey responses the consultant provided the Vice Provost for Libraries a comprehensive list of recommendations for specific aspects to consider as further, more internally grounded recommendations are developed by staff teams. While the strategic planning process proceeded, the consultant recommended that selected, representative teams of 4-6 staff members be appointed to research and recommend changes in the following organizational systems:

- The Leadership and Team Decision-Making Systems, including the structure and role of the Diversity Team;
- The Performance Management System – with a focus on what improvements can be added to the currently prescribed procedures that would increase constructive approaches to developing staff;
- The Hiring, Merit and Promotion Systems – with an emphasis on the processes used, the involvement of peers and the clarity of the goals and criteria;

- The Communication System – with a focus on Leadership Council, the Strategic Planning Process and the "Staffing to Vision" approach;
- The approaches to learning, training, and innovation.

Each team was clearly charged to:

- understand the current situation (i.e., what is prescribed, what is practiced, what is changeable from internal Policy and Procedure documentation and interviews with campus sources);
- understand what is desirable and will impact improved customer service using the ARL/OCDA and the Consultant's Report's data and analysis;
- develop and evaluate potential actions which can be taken, using the recommendations of the consultant as a starting point; and,
- consult with the organizational and staff development librarian and the Leadership Council to decide which high-benefit/acceptable cost actions can be implemented over the next two years.

In order to insure that teams worked from actual data and did not rely too much on perceptions gleaned from the Survey and the Focus Group Summaries, the consultant also recommended that the following be collected by the organizational and staff development librarian and shared with each team as appropriate:

- Staff salary improvement and turnover data
- Staff promotion data
- Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity hiring data
- Exit interview data
- Trend data regarding budget allocation to the Libraries (personnel, capital and operations)
- An outlined history of organizational changes in structure and staffing over the past 18 years.

This combined set of data would enable the Libraries to understand what is actually happening to the organizational infrastructure that may or may not be contributing to the development of a healthy organization committed to customer service and continuous improvement.

In addition the works of Roosevelt Thomas, especially *Beyond Race and Gender: Unleashing the Power of Your Total Work Force by Managing Diversity,* were recommended as a starting point to better understand how workforce diversity and complexity play out in the seemingly simple questions posed in the OCDA Survey. The consultant also reminded the UConn Libraries administration to consider the sensitivity of minority responses to questions regarding diversity and discrimination in the OCDA Survey, and give less attention to "average" or total responses, since the underrepresented members of the staff comprised a very small minority.

Delivery of the Report and Follow-Up

After sending the written report to the Vice Provost for Libraries, the consultant met with the Vice Provost; the organizational and staff development librarian; and the Leadership Council and discussed their reactions, answered questions and provided further clarifications. Much of this conversation helped to familiarize the Leadership Council members with the systems view of organizations and to help them not personalize the information provided by the Report and the Focus Groups. She then addressed an All Staff Meeting which was attended by almost the entire staff. In this meeting she again reminded the staff of the purpose and timing of the original survey. She stressed the commitment of the Vice Provost for Libraries and Leadership Council to discover root causes and move toward making positive changes in the climate of the UConn Libraries, and of their agreements to appoint staff teams to pursue further research and the development of recommendations for action.

Library Actions based on the Consultant's Work

The organizational development consultant advised the formation of six teams to address internal systems and an initial three teams, prioritized by the consultant and comprised of staff members from across the library were formed. These teams were charged to "formulate a set of recommended actions that will contribute to a healthier organizational climate that promotes enhanced customer service by improving the Libraries': (1) leadership and team decision-making systems; (2) performance management system; and (3) hiring, merit, and promotion systems." The findings, recommendations, and progress-to-date of each team are summarized below.

Leadership and Team Decision-Making System Project Team (LTDMSPT)

This Team was charged with formulating a set of recommended actions that would improve the Libraries' decision-making system with a focus on clarifying leadership roles of the Libraries' various stakeholders including Leadership Council members and Team Leaders, and studied the design, structure, and expectations from cross-functional, area, and project/task teams in the Library.

To accomplish its work, the Leadership and Team Decision-Making System Project Team reviewed relevant policy documents and reports, and administered three in-house staff surveys. The first two surveys were targeted toward Team Leaders and Team Members and focused on empowerment and decision making; the third survey was administered to all staff and focused on leadership issues. The survey results indicated that most teams used consensus as a decision making tool and shared leadership emerged as the primary team model. However, there was a lack of agreement on and consistent practice of a clearly defined leadership model. There was also a lack of clarity in some areas about the model of consensus and the leadership roles in a Learning Organization.

Based on its findings, LTDMSPT made the following recommendations to clearly define both the roles and the responsibilities of leaders and individual staff:

- Carefully define various leadership models to determine if the Library will be led from the top down, from the middle, or by shared leadership;
- Individual staff be held responsible for their participation under the Libraries' new leadership and decision making structure;
- Consider restructuring Leadership Council as part of reorganization process to possibly include some team leaders;
- All members of Leadership Council attend leadership training together and periodically participate in team building exercises;
- Provide ongoing mandatory training to all team leaders on subjects like communication, facilitation skills, project management, team building, and managerial skills;
- Reduce the number of standing cross-functional teams; and
- Modify the Libraries' current meeting structure.

All of these recommendations were addressed by the Libraries during its reorganization. The University of Connecticut Libraries Reorganization Project Team (2009) recognized that to achieve a dynamic organization:

- leaders must lead from within the organization, not from above;
- authority must be vested in the appropriate staff throughout the organization, rather than held only at the top;
- there must be clearly stated measurable goals, but also the ability to adapt and

make timely changes to achieve those goals; and
- there must be a unified purpose and a determined focus on work that advances that purpose.

The model also clearly identifies the leadership roles of individuals within the organization:

- The *Vice Provost for University Libraries* is ultimately responsible for the overall success of the University of Connecticut Libraries. In administering the Libraries, the Vice Provost consults with many constituent groups including other University administrators, the Provost's Library Advisory Committee, the Director's Council, The Libraries' Planning Team, the Libraries' Team Leaders and external entities.
- The *Assistant Vice Provost for University Libraries* and the P*rogram Area Directors* are responsible for the success of their program areas, and together with the Vice Provost, the overall success of the Libraries.
- *Team Leaders* are responsible for the success of their teams. The Team Leaders meet informally twice a month to provide support to each other on management and leadership issues, discuss important developments, explore opportunities for collaboration, and to have honest discussion about larger library issues such as staff morale, trust, and communication. Attendance is entirely voluntary and there is no formal agenda. Every other bi-weekly meeting is also attended by the Vice Provost of Libraries. This "face time with the VP" gives Team Leaders an opportunity to raise any issues of interest or concern.
- *Library Staff Members* are responsible for successfully carrying out their individual position duties, their team assignments, and for suggesting and implementing process improvements to better serve library users. The new Libraries structure supports matrix relationships among staff members outside established Program Area Teams. Each staff member has one supervisor, but many staff members have both a primary reporting relationship to their Program Area Team and, by virtue of their position duties, a secondary (non-reporting) relationship to a team outside their home program area.

A "Decision Table" clarifying the decision-making authority of various entities under the new leadership model was developed and shared with all staff. This table identifies the key entities including the Vice Provost, the Director's Council, Program Area Directors, Collections Budget Team, Planning Team, Area Team Leaders, and Cross Program Teams and indicates their decision making role. The table identifies such core operations as charging and populating standing and project teams; allocating budgets; personnel decisions; setting library hours; hiring and promotion and clearly identifies who is in-charge of making decisions for each such function.

Leadership Council was renamed the Directors' Council and while it still consists of the Vice Provost for Libraries, the Assistant Vice Provost, and the Program Area Directors, its role and charge have been modified. The Directors' Council advises the Vice Provost on the overall administration of the University Libraries, charges standing teams, and approves operating budgets, staffing requests, and library-wide policies.

A new Planning Team that also reports to the Vice Provost for Libraries was established. The Planning Team facilitates collaboration among staff members both within and outside their program areas. The team is charged with setting the Libraries' strategic priority goals, charging and populating cross program area project teams, updating the Libraries' strategic plan at least once every five years and administering the

carry forward budget designated to fund strategic initiatives. Five members, one from each program area, with staggered two-year term are eligible to serve on the Planning Team. Members are elected by the library staff area by area.

A *Diversity Advisory Team* was charged to coordinate the Libraries' diversity related initiatives. Reporting directly to the Vice Provost for Libraries, the team is comprised of rotating members reflecting staff diversity both in terms of human identity (e.g., ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, and age), as well as program areas teams, and regional campuses within the Libraries. The Diversity Advisory Team serves as a resource to the Vice Provost for University Libraries and the University Libraries staff. It also works with the Library Student Advisory Council to seek continual student input on library collections, services, and diversity-related projects and initiatives.

As recommended by the Leadership Project Team, Leadership Council members attended intensive interactive leadership training (Burnham Rosen Group, 2009) together and also received individual counseling. Leadership Council members have subsequently tried to schedule one meeting a month to follow up on interactive leadership principles.

The Libraries also instituted a mandatory training program for all Team Leaders and Team Members. The Interaction and Leadership Training Program covers topics such as providing feedback to others, resolving conflict, interaction skills, etc. All Team Leaders and Members attended workshops in 2009 and refresher sessions were held in 2010 for Team Leaders.

As part of the reorganization, over 15 cross functional project teams were decommissioned and the Libraries' meeting structure was modified. Facilitating communication among all staff is an important aspect of the Planning Team's work. Each month, the team organizes town hall meetings where staff can share ideas; propose and discuss new initiatives; learn about important developments within the Library and beyond; and provide and seek feedback on projects. These meetings have been well attended by staff and have contributed to increased awareness of institution-wide issues.

In addition, the Planning Team conducts a "Strategic Goal Development Fair" every six months. This offers staff an opportunity to submit proposals that would enhance user services and contribute to the Library's five-year Strategic Plan. The Fair offers staff a venue to brainstorm and develop ideas, garner feedback, and identify interested partners for collaboration. Subsequently, staff members submit written proposals to the Planning Team, which reviews them against a set of criteria. Besides increasing staff involvement in planning and decision-making, this process has generated goodwill and good-spirited competition among staff to forward ideas that would increase user satisfaction and contribute to the Library's strategic plan.

Performance Management Project Team

The Performance Management Project Team was charged to investigate performance management issues such as goal setting, coaching, performance evaluation, staff development, and progressive discipline.

To carry out its charge, the team consulted existing forms used for goal setting and reporting of annual activities and achievements. It also studied the current performance evaluation practices including training opportunities available to supervisors. Feedback regarding the existing goal statement form indicated that most staff members found the form confusing. Lack of explanations led to varying interpretation of terms such as strategic, operational, and individual goals, and outcome measures. The team also identified a need for quarterly performance reviews to ensure that

performance evaluation became a yearlong exercise rather than once-a-year activity. It pointed out that quarterly reviews would facilitate regular dialogue between employees and supervisors regarding progress made on mutually agreed upon goals, assist in clarifying work priorities, set expectations and remove any surprises in the end. Mandatory performance review training for all supervisors emerged as another issue requiring attention.

The Performance Management Project Team made the following recommendations to improve the Libraries' performance management systems:

- Revise and clarify the Goal Setting and the Report of Activity and Achievements Forms: To eliminate staff confusion, the team proposed revising the forms by clarifying terms, streamlining categories, and including additional identifying information. For example, the team recommended replacing strategic, individual and/or personal goals with a performance goal category. The performance goal is defined as a mutually agreed upon goal by supervisor and employee about what the employee is going to achieve. It is based on an employee's current work assignment and is aligned to the area and strategic plans.
- Training on setting SMART goals: Employees and supervisors receive training on how to set Specific, Measureable, Attainable/Accountable, Results Oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals.
- Performance evaluation training for all supervisors must be made mandatory, and must be made available for new supervisory staff arriving after performance management period training has ended.
- Mandatory contributions by all team leaders to team members' evaluations.
- Quarterly reviews of all staff to help ensure performance management is an ongoing process throughout the year rather than a brief, once-per-year discussion.
- Development of an intranet site to serve as a repository for documents related to performance management including best practices.

Five of the six Performance Management Project Team's recommendations (excluding the intranet site) have been implemented. The revisions proposed to the Goals Setting form and the Report of Activities and Achievements forms were accepted and adopted by the Libraries in 2009. SMART goals setting training for all employees is offered and mandatory performance management training for supervisors is required. Team Leaders who have team members with assignments on multiple teams must receive input from non-supervising team leaders when completing performance evaluations. Quarterly reviews were adopted as standard practice and the Quarterly Review form developed by the team is being used by the entire library system. The quarterly reviews allow staff and their supervisors to touch base on a regular basis and monitor progress on mutually agreed goals, adjusting them if needed throughout the year to address competing priorities, new developments, and workload issues.

Hiring, Merit, and Promotion Systems Team

The Hiring, Merit, and Promotion Systems Team was charged to formulate a set of recommended actions that would improve the Libraries' hiring, merit, and promotion system. The Team was to focus on the processes used, the involvement of peers, and the clarity of the goals and criteria. It is important to note that the frameworks of the Libraries' hiring, merit and promotion systems are set by the University or by collective bargaining agreements, therefore, any changes to the Libraries' policies or practices must fit within those frameworks.

The team collected and reviewed data in the following areas: approximate average search costs in dollars and in staff time; UConn Office of Diversity & Equity, UConn Human Resources and UConn Libraries search policies and practices; UConn and UConn Libraries promotion policies and practices; merit policies and practices; historical data from 2001-2006 on Libraries merit awards; the OCDA Final Report; comments from the OCDA focus groups; and the results of a questionnaire sent to UConn Libraries staff. The team also held a joint meeting with the Performance Management Systems Team to discuss shared concerns.

Fewer opportunities to interact with and provide feedback about job candidates emerged as one of the major staff concerns. The advancement opportunities available to the Libraries' staff were found to be adequate, nevertheless, the Hiring, Merit, and Promotion Systems Team recommended various enhancements to the current systems including additional educational opportunities for staff. The team also made a set of recommendations to make the University's Discretionary Merit System more fair and transparent. Listed below are various recommendations of this team:

Hiring

- *Search Committee Composition:* The immediate supervisor and at least one member of each job class in an open position's team membership should be on the search committee. Whenever possible diversify the search committee as needed by including, for example, departmental faculty, a staff member in a comparable position, or a counterpart from regional campus libraries, etc.
- Form search committee early enough in the hiring process that committee members can review job duties, job qualifications, and job postings before they are submitted to the human resources department. A shared understanding of the job expectations for the position would make the search committee's work easier and consistent.
- *Improving the Search Process:* Provide additional avenues for feedback from staff members not serving on search committees.
- *Departures:* Revise the current exit interview questions. Assess and prioritize the vacant position's duties if they are to be assigned to one or more staff, including what will not get done. Solicit volunteers, system-wide if possible and allow people to build on skills and interests. If the vacant position's duties are not going to be distributed among existing staff but still need to be carried out in the short term, hire an end-date or special payroll employee to cover those duties until a final decision is made about filling the position.

Merit

- *Establish a Standard Framework for University Merit:* Align "library language" with "University merit language."
- *Communicate Criteria for University Merit Effectively to Staff:* Supervisors should clarify criteria for merit in conjunction with annual goal setting meetings.
- *Make a Clear Case for Merit Recommendations:* Direct supervisor should clearly explain on the University merit form how an employee's achievements are merit-worthy.

Promotion

- *Educational Opportunities*: Libraries' Union representatives should arrange for annual brown bag sessions to help library staff understand their options for promotion or reclassification. Supervisors should understand the promotion options available to each staff member they supervise. Supervisors should encourage their staff to pursue promotion and provide timelines.

- *New Career Ladders:* Investigate and implement a tiered promotion ladder for non-University Librarian/non-University Library Assistant UCPEA (University of Connecticut Professional Employees Association) and classified staff.
- First time candidates for promotion, regardless of rank, should be assigned a mentor to guide them through the process.

Considerable progress has been made related to hiring, merit, and promotions. New search committees charged since 2009 have incorporated several of the team's recommendations including committee members with diverse background and forming search committees early enough to allow committee members to participate in drafting job postings and job description. All new hires are assigned mentors and are provided an "orientation checklist" to ensure that they are introduced to the Libraries' services and collections in a systematic way. In coordination with their supervisor, new staff schedule one-on-one meetings with relevant teams, areas, and library staff associated with their responsibilities to learn more about local policies, procedures, and issues of concerns.

A standard framework that aligns library examples with university merit language was established and communicated in 2010. This framework provides more guidance to supervisors on how to evaluate and rank staff performance for merit.

Conclusion

The ClimateQUAL® results and the follow-up with the OD consultant helped in identifying potential problem areas within the Libraries' internal systems. The OD consultant made recommendations that led to the development of concrete roadmaps, benchmarks, and associated strategies to improve the Libraries' leadership, organizational structure and decision-making models; hiring, merit, and promotion systems; and the performance management system. The Libraries progress on its Strategic Plan which includes relevant LibQUAL+® metrics will serve as the barometer for gauging the effect of these changes.

The UConn Libraries participated in LibQUAL® again in 2010 and will likely re-administer the ClimateQUAL® survey to assess the staff's perceptions of actual progress toward creating a healthy climate that is in congruence with its values as a team-based learning organization. The Libraries hope to continually improve and contribute to customers' success by providing a supportive climate where teamwork, diversity, and justice are reflected in their policies, procedures, and practices.

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