

## **REPORT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

### **BACKGROUND**

In the spring of 2006 President Wright established two working groups to address recommendations made by McKinsey & Co. One of the committees reviewed administrative communication and culture and the other examined hiring and retention issues. Although they worked separately, both committees received significant feedback regarding orientation, training, professional development and advancement opportunities at the College. The following report combines the observations and recommendations made by the two committees.

During open meetings hosted by both committees many employees raised concerns about the lack of sufficient orientation and training for new staff. Employees talked about how long it took in some cases to get to know the campus and the general confusion about where to turn for services and support; they noted the challenges of being new to the community and how long it can take to feel welcome and find individuals with similar interests, backgrounds, or roles.

Employees also raised concerns around the lack of support for ongoing professional development and opportunities for growth and advancement. Although internal candidates fill many positions at the College, a large number of employees mentioned what is perceived to be a glass ceiling in the College, due to a dearth of both professional development opportunities and possibilities for promotion and career advancement. Many felt that internal candidates are disadvantaged in the hiring process and that coming up through the system can work against one's chances for advancement, i.e., that new hires/externals are advantaged in terms of promotion and in terms of salary. Employees mentioned that there is not always support from managers for training and professional development and that managers are not always equipped to provide advice or guidance regarding career advancement.

In contrast to the results of the recent college-wide employee survey, many staff provided anecdotes suggesting a low level of morale among those who have limited opportunities for growth within Dartmouth, stemming from a number of considerations, including a sense of being undervalued (because of low raises, lack of promotion possibilities) combined with a heavy workload. The long time that it takes to fill vacancies contributes to the morale problem: current staff need to pick up the extra burden and are increasingly overworked. These and other issues related to investing in our employees have led to frustration, feelings of inertia, and of being "stuck" in a job. Sometimes, they have led to the departure of valuable and talented staff.

We need to create a culture in which we communicate with one another with respect and civility; where professional development is valued and encouraged, and available to staff at all levels; and where employees are recognized and rewarded for innovative and creative ideas. We also need to have managers with strong supervisory skills, who are motivators and listeners, and who can guide employees to resources that can help them with skills development and their own professional growth.

Top performing employees need opportunities to renew their skills, learn new ones, and to grow. As an institution we need to invest in our employees by providing opportunities

that help staff reach their full potential. Dartmouth should strive for an administrative organization that is energetic, responsive, and creative; that encourages risk-taking and rewards superb performance; and that embraces ongoing development as essential to maintaining a top-performing institution. Finally, we need to consider the development of a range of growth and learning opportunities if we want to encourage and inspire talented and motivated employees to stay.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We recommend that Human Resources develop an institutional orientation, training, and professional development framework that:

- Takes advantage of internal and external resources and allows for central and divisional/departmental responses to staff development needs;
- Is aligned with institutional values and priorities;
- Includes diversity awareness and sensitivity;
- Is responsive to the changing needs of employees; and
- Involves a blended learning approach (on-line, classroom, individualized).

## **ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION OF CURRENT PROGRAMS**

The Office of Human Resources, in partnership with appropriate representatives across campus, should:

- Conduct an all-campus needs assessment to determine the types of orientation, training, and professional development needs and interests of our employees;
- Conduct an inventory of existing programs: *Are they open to all or just a discrete group? How often are they offered? How successful are they? Could they be expanded to include more participants? Should they be offered more frequently, or be replicated elsewhere on campus?*
- Determine the skills that are required in certain positions and make sure that training is provided for individuals assuming those roles. Specifically, we recommend a suite of management training courses geared towards new managers, and refresher courses for more experienced managers;
- Determine what should be offered centrally versus within divisions or departments.

## ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

- **Establish new employee information/handbooks:** In addition to a campus-wide new-employee handbook, each division should develop a supplement or an insert describing its own procedures and policies. It would be important to include an organizational chart, and to update this document on a regular basis.
- **Welcoming events:** The College should host more events (meals, other gatherings) to both welcome new employees and introduce them to employees outside of their general area.
- **Information Sessions:** The *Dartmouth Today* program received high praise but access to this program is too limited. We recommend that HR consider alternative ways to deliver the content from this program to a broader audience.
- **Orientation:** New employee orientation should help employees understand not only their department or specific responsibilities, but should also increase their understanding of the College's mission and the staff role, the role of the faculty and what it means to be faculty. Employees should also be informed of goals, challenges and successes (of one's individual area and of the College as a whole)
- **Web-based Video Training:** The College should develop programs that can be used at any time by any employee to learn the basics of systems such as blitzmail or the telephone system.
- **Focus on Managers:** Specific training should be provided to managers across the institution. Training should include: communication skills (including providing feedback); hiring, supervising, and evaluating personnel; addressing personnel issues (including grievances); setting expectations; helping staff with professional development; creating and sustaining a supportive and diverse work environment.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT

Create a variety of professional development opportunities at all levels including:

- Virtual and actual learning communities on campus for peer support and shared problem solving;
- Brown bag lunches with colleagues from across the campus;
- Informal gatherings that facilitate communication across departmental boundaries and among staff who would not otherwise come together;
- Lists and a lending library of recommended books and readings;
- A staff career counseling office in HR (this office could be involved with efforts for partner placement and could advise those interested in advancement).

Encourage and support:

- Participation in regional conferences and workshops with peers from other institutions to share best practices and gain a broader understanding of higher education;

- Opportunities to present at conferences;
- Enrollment in courses, at Dartmouth or elsewhere;
- Employee attendance at special events and lectures

## MENTORING

Mentoring relationships provide new (and continuing) employees the opportunity to learn more about the institution's culture; interact with individuals with similar backgrounds, work experience, and roles; and develop a support network. Such relationships can exist on a number of levels (e.g. between or within departments and divisions) and can provide coaching for new managers, star performers, and employees with performance concerns.

- **Mentoring networks:** A significant effort is required both to establish and to maintain such networks, and several issues need to be worked out in advance (such as who is eligible to be a mentor, how are they assigned, what are the expectations for participants, etc.)
- **Managers:** To further assist with development of successful managers we recommend creating a managerial mentoring network, which would build a cohort of managers who could mentor one another.

## DIVERSITY

To support our institutional commitment to create and sustain a diverse work environment we must provide ample opportunities for employees to increase their understanding of and competency with a range of diversity issues; equip managers with the skills to hire, train, and manage a diverse staff; and encourage a culture that supports and affirms all employees.

Specific recommendations related to orientation, training, and professional development include:

- Provide training for diversity awareness/sensitivity for the entire campus
- Create welcoming and orientation programs that focus on issues of diversity
- Conduct regular surveys or assessments to determine whether employees consider the workplace to be supportive and respectful of diversity
- Support and encourage opportunities for all staff to attend diversity-related workshops, MLK events, etc.
- Create mentoring opportunities for minority staff members as part of the overall mentors network described in the report of the Hiring and Retention Working Group
- Support employee-led cultural heritage events and celebrations
- Develop and support diverse affinity groups
- Expand diversity outreach efforts to include membership in professional associations (e.g. Black MBA Association) and partnerships with local, regional and national organizations. The latter not only creates a pipeline for new hires but also provides a support network for current employees and managers.

We recognize that the coordination of several of these efforts would require significant resources. For instance, Cornell has an Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality at Cornell, which oversees “equal opportunity, affirmative action, diversity, and

the ‘balance’ between work and personal life. The office serves as a liaison to local community organizations that address the employment interests of individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups.”

### **RECOGNITION AND BENEFITS**

In addition to training and professional development opportunities employees also noted a variety of ways they would like to have their work recognized and their value affirmed by the College. Employees offered the following suggestions most often:

- Increase recognition of staff in official communications
- Provide bonuses to recognize extraordinary performance, special assignments taken on, etc.
- Increase “special benefits” to staff: this could include discounted tickets to HOP events, to the gym
- Provide maternity leave for employees having a baby or adopting one rather than short-term disability leave
- Provide more support for day care expenses
- Consider flexible work time for positions where work can be done off-campus or after regular business hours
- Sponsor social events, subsidized lunches, more open meetings, more opportunities to meet people across areas.

While it may not be practicable or desirable to implement all of these suggestions, the College and Human Resources in particular should consider how to move forward with some of these ideas. The Office of Human Resources should also encourage staff to submit ideas on how the College can recognize and reward employees.