



**UNIVERSITY SENATE
Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee**

Report and Recommendation on Employee Professional and Personal Development

1. THE CHARGE

S-0801 **Employee Professional and Personal Development:** Discuss, and make recommendations on, how Rutgers can best promote professional and personal development for all of its employees. Consider in these discussions Rutgers' established mechanisms for providing educational opportunities for faculty and staff and their families, the draft resolution on this matter from the Staff Caucus, and relevant input solicited through appropriate Rutgers offices and individuals from various, affected constituencies. Evaluate the mechanisms by which such opportunities are made available to employees, and suggest improved means for encouraging Rutgers employees to take advantage of available professional and personal development programs, and for establishing a continuing culture of employee development at Rutgers. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by November 2009.

2. SUMMARY

The Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee (FPAC) was asked to review and investigate how best to promote professional and personal development for all employees. Professional development is a shared responsibility between Rutgers, the employee, and the supervisor. Increased knowledge and greater skills enable employees to perform more effectively in current positions and can increase workplace morale. Development of the Rutgers workforce is essential to the improvement and productivity of the university.

The purpose of professional development programs is to provide a systematic approach to training, education, and development for employees that will promote excellence in instructional programs, research efforts, institutional and student services, and community outreach. The objective of a professional development program is to link learning to the context of an employee's professional responsibilities while affording an opportunity for the practice of key competencies within the work site. By engaging in professional development, individuals maintain and improve professional competence, enhance career progression, keep abreast of new technologies and practices, and are prepared to address regulatory requirements from professional or government organizations.

Having carefully examined the current culture of professional development at Rutgers University and concluded that an adequate structure is lacking, the FPAC unanimously supports changes to the annual review process whereby professional development opportunities are openly discussed between supervisor and employee. In addition, the committee supports changes that create and provide the means for policies that encourage compensated release time for development experiences during regular work hours and that provide for a clearing house of professional opportunities at Rutgers. To review these policies and ensure that a suitable culture of professional development that benefits both employees as well as the University is enhanced and maintained, a University-wide committee on Professional Development is needed. To assess the impact of these proposed recommendations on the culture of professional development at Rutgers, the FPAC will revisit this issue in 5 years.

3. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

The FPAC met and discussed the charge in nine sessions (1/25/08, 9/19/08, 10/24/08, 11/21/09, 1/23/09, 2/27/09, 3/27/09, 10/23/09, and 12/04/09). In its deliberations, the committee considered professional development surveys conducted by Rutgers Human Resources (2002 and 2005), personal interviews with staff (including senators) and several faculty members. The committee differentiated between professional development, which they consider as necessary for both the professional needs of the employees as well as the improvement and productivity of their units, from personal development and family educational opportunities. The committee voted to remove the latter from consideration.

3.I. Background and Discussion

Personal interviews:

Input on the matter of professional development was sought via email and through informal interviews. Approximately 50 staff members and several faculty members contributed their thoughts on the subject. In summary, the following issues were common to many of the conversations:

- **No systematic approach to professional development.** Although many supervisors are very encouraging when it comes to professional development, the vast majority of them neglect this aspect of their mentoring and management responsibilities, and some have even taken a confrontational approach.
- **Some development opportunities offered to employees are irrelevant to their needs or interests.** Some employees commented on the high quality of professional development opportunities offered by UHR; others, however, were required to take courses that were irrelevant to their needs or interests, perhaps for the appearances of the department.
- **Time off to attend development classes.** Many employees were not permitted to participate in professional development during working hours; others were forced to use paid time off.
- **Coverage for normal duties during professional development.** Supervisors of employees who wish to participate in professional development opportunities may find it difficult to ensure that duties are covered while the employee is away from the office, particularly if the employee is the only receptionist or assistant in the office. This seems to be particularly problematic for secretarial support staff or for employees at units such as dining services.
- **Some classes are oversubscribed.** Staff mentioned that many UHR courses, while they cover a broad range of skill sets and are available at various times throughout the year, are oversubscribed, and registration must take place far in advance, particularly for certificate programs.
- **Making sense of the range of opportunities for development.** The range of opportunities itself seems to present a challenge; between courses offered through IT units, courses offered through Continuing Education, courses and workshops offered through UHR, workshops offered through Career Services, and the panoply of courses offered through degree-granting units, employees have difficulty making sense of the options. A conversation with the supervisor would be useful to sort through programs and to strike a balance between unit needs and individual interests.
- **Development through professional organizations.** These opportunities are not often readily discussed between manager and employee. One staff member said that “the last time I asked to attend a conference I was told I could not go unless I presented. Two of us came up with an idea for a presentation and we were told two people couldn't go. That's the last time I asked.”

3.II. Recommendations

The FPAC has concluded that a general culture of professional development at Rutgers is lacking. For the foregoing reasons, the FPAC resolved to offer the following recommendation for adoption by the University Senate:

- 1) Include, as part of an employee's annual review, a separate section pertaining to professional development to ensure that employees have the opportunity to inform supervisors of any additional educational or training opportunities they have pursued. An optimal minimum of professional development might be 6 hours of professional development per year; this minimum is encouraged, however, but not proscribed.
- 2) Include, as part of a supervisor's annual review, a separate section where a supervisor may articulate professional opportunities availed by unit employees during the concluding year. Specific plans for employee professional development during the coming year may also be indicated.
- 3) Put in place policies that encourage managers to release staff members during regular work hours for these professional development experiences, and create relationships among units that might need additional coverage when staffing is at a minimum.
- 4) Develop one central website for staff professional development with links to the various types of professional development opportunities within Rutgers (OIRT, UHR, ODL, CTAAR, Continuing Ed), as well as to professional organizations: ACE, NASPA (student personnel), NACADA (for

academic advising), NCHC (for honors), NACUBO (for business officers), NACUFS (for food services), APPA (for facilities), ACCRAO (admissions), AFA (fraternities), ACED-I (conference and events directors), ASJA (judicial affairs), NACURH (residence halls), NACAS (auxiliary services), NAFSA/CIEE (global programs), NIRSA (recreation), NAFSAA (financial aid), CUPA-HR, and others, so that the identification of these opportunities becomes easier, and so that employees see themselves as professionals. Encourage membership in these professional organizations.

- 4) Establish a University-wide committee on Professional Development to continue to address these issues.
- 5) To assess the impact of these proposed recommendations on the culture of professional development at Rutgers, the FPAC proposes to revisit this issue in 5 years.

4. **RESOLUTION**

In Support of the University Senate's Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee's Report and Recommendations:

Whereas, Rutgers University prides itself on providing educational opportunities aimed at degree attainment and certification for citizens of the State of New Jersey, including its own full time faculty and staff and their children; and

Whereas, Rutgers University provides other educational opportunities for full time faculty and staff through voluntary and mandatory training sessions and workshops taught by many departments at the university; and

Whereas, professional development serves to benefit all employees while improving the productivity of the unit; and

Whereas, these opportunities are not currently available in an equitable manner throughout the university;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Rutgers University Senate endorses the "Report and Recommendation on Charge S-0801."

Faculty Affairs and Personnel Committee 2009-10

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