A&S Staff Retreat – Meeting notes
August 11, 2016
8:30-12:30

Welcome
Mike Sonntag welcomed over 85 staff members to the retreat. He assured us that the day would be filed with positive messages, and with help from Cindy Treacy, reminded us that A&S Staff members kick butt.

Team-building Activity
Everyone participated in a teambuilding activity. Teams were given a word that describes our staff. Each person of the team had to hold a string tied onto a marker and write the word without touching the marker. The words were posted around the room for us to reflect on throughout the morning. A&S Staff members are:

1. DEPENDABLE
2. ENTHUSIASTIC
3. INTELLIGENT
4. INFORMATIVE
5. RESOURCEFUL
6. SUPPORTIVE
7. HARDWORKING
8. RESPECTFUL

This activity reminded us that working together as a team to accomplish a common goal can be fun, challenging, and rewarding. More importantly, it reaffirmed that the people around us have these positive characteristics and are great team players to work with.

State of the College
Dean Petren thanked everyone for taking time out of their busy schedule to attend the retreat. He noted that the time spent organizing the day and preparing meaningful activities and training, would be useful for all. The Dean expressed the college’s openness and welcoming of new ideas to improve processes and environments.

Dean Petren discussed the budget briefly, noting that our student enrollments are strong and that we are making progress towards a balanced budget. The college is undertaking new initiatives to ensure the future success and strength of A&S, allowing us to offer students an excellent research-based Arts and Sciences education. The Dean will continue to encourage the use of innovative teaching techniques, experiential learning, and online course offerings to move our college forward. Staff are encouraged to think of new ways to engage students and think out-of-the-box.
Dean Petren confirmed that the Presidential Search Committee was selected without staff representation, but strongly encouraged all staff to participate in the on-line survey and nomination process (advertised in eCurrents) and at the open forum sessions that will be offered in the coming months. He also encouraged staff to speak out at the appropriate times to request representation in future searches. Carol Tonge-Mack noted that Bleuzette Marshall has been made aware of the desire for staff representation.

**Affirmation & Gratitude Session**
The goal of this exercise is to solicit input on how to strengthen our awareness of each other’s contributions and continue improving the culture of our working environment.

**Affirmations:** Affirmations strengthen us by manifesting the potential of an action. They also make us feel more secure in our roles. They provide a foundation to start building an environment that supports, validates and is inclusive of input and suggestions from everyone. They allow us to be more intentional and explicit about our words we use, which help shape culture. *You are shaping the culture.* We want to build good professional relationships, which require trust. The first step towards trust is showing appreciation.

- Think: Don’t write, but think privately about individuals you respect, staff with whom you work and enjoy working with. Think about why you have this level of respect for them.
- Write: List of positive characteristics that describe the people you appreciate.
- Pair: As a group (table) Identify 5-6 common characteristics = create a “super list”
- Share: Share these lists with the room – why do we value these characteristics as a group?
- Thank: Show gratitude – next section

These are the impressive characteristics that emerged – *it is important to note that this is how we describe each other – these words are how we think of each other as colleagues:*

- Growth mindset
- Empowering
- Approachable
- High level of emotional intelligence
- Honest and fair
- Sense of humor
- Calm
- Positive
- Passionate
- Loyal / dedicated
- Authentic
- Solution oriented
- Good listener
- Communicative
- Optimistic
Gratitude: Gratitude shifts your focus from what is lacking to what is present.

- Acknowledge and thank people who have those characteristics
- There is a significant body of research that supports an association between gratitude and an individual’s well-being.
- [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/pdfs/GratitudePDFs/2Wood-GratitudeWell-BeingReview.pdf](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/pdfs/GratitudePDFs/2Wood-GratitudeWell-BeingReview.pdf)
  [http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/in-praise-of-gratitude](http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/in-praise-of-gratitude)

Don’t forget to show gratitude and praise to those people that you identified during this exercise. Make it meaningful and memorable - be specific with your acknowledgment and gratitude! A small gesture of gratitude can go a long way!

Staff Survey Results
Associate Dean David Stradling described research conducted over the summer to assess improvement made since the Faculty Senate survey conducted in the spring of 2015. David discussed staff levels with each of the heads and found some common themes. First, heads are overwhelmingly pleased with the staff with whom they work on a regular basis. Second, they are concerned that they might lose valued staff because of continued stress from overwork or low pay, or both.

The Staff Board also conducted a survey of staff this summer, some of the results of which David discussed. While the survey indicates that improvement has been made, staff would like to see better communication from the administration and fuller inclusion in decision making. The survey echoed many of the thoughts expressed by the heads, especially the concern that advancement requires moving to a new position, most likely outside of the college. The Staff Board will determine when and how to distribute the survey results.

Combining information from the heads and the survey, David made several recommendations for short-term and long-term actions:

1. David will serve as the Dean’s office staff liaison and “ombudsman.”
2. The college will set aside a modest amount of funding for staff professional development, which will be distributed through a mechanism developed by the Staff Board.
3. The college will help support the hiring of student workers and offer some light training so that they can be more useful to department staff.
4. The college will create a more complete training regimen for new hires – a topic taken up by the Staff Board.
5. The college will develop a clearer advancement latter for staff so that turnover might be slowed.
Developing a Professional Community

Who are the people that inspire you and help you do your best?

Through the use of a strong professional community, we have support to do our job better and feel part of a broader community of like-minded individuals with whom we can share our ideas and grow as professionals. This activity, which we encourage everyone to do on their own, forces us to reflect on what our community presently is, to acknowledge their support and to consider whether we should be more pro-active to expand our professional community. The worksheet from the retreat is also available here to use.

Professional Direction/Access to Opportunities:

Who helps you understand the path to move forward in your career? How do you find out about professional opportunities that will help you advance? Who helps you figure out how to progress and move forward professionally?

1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________

Feedback/Input:

Who are you serving and how can you elicit feedback/input from them? Who offers constructive and useful feedback? To whom do you offer feedback?

1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________

Performance Improvement (How to do your job better):

Who has institutional knowledge to help us do our jobs better? Who is well connected and knows the UC Community? Who is an expert on your job’s specific procedures, forms, policies, etc.?

1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________

Intellectual Safe Place/Creative & Professional Growth:

Who helps you incubate your ideas? Who provides a non-judgmental place for you to be creative? Who supports and encourages you to develop & think of ways to implement new ideas?

1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________
Staff Retreat Anonymous Exit Survey
Results from the exit survey are attached. Here are the common themes:

- Liked the positive messaging
- Valued meeting and getting to spend time with colleagues
- Valued hearing and seeing the survey results
- Really liked that the Dean and all Associate Deans stayed for the whole time
- Would have liked more of an overview of structure of Dean’s office
- Wanted more details about survey results
- Want to know what will happen next
- New date will be considered for next year’s retreat – August is not ideal for many

A comment from a colleague: "I feel that we will begin to live out what we’ve discussed as we move to improve personally and professionally. Hopefully, we’ll all work for the betterment of our individual offices, departments, and the college as a whole."

Lunch, Q&A, and Networking