

2007 Staff Development Survey Results

with comparisons to 2005 results

April 2008

A Collaborative Project of

The Human Resources Division

College & University Chief Human Resource Officers

The Staff and Leadership Development Steering Committee

The Organizational Effectiveness Research Group, Minnesota State University, Mankato

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During December 2007, the Office of the Chancellor Human Resources Division conducted a survey to assess employee development needs of all staff (except faculty represented by IFO and MSCF) across the Minnesota State College and Universities system. The overall response rate was 46%, with a total of 3,382 surveys completed. A similar survey conducted in 2005 allows comparison between the two surveys.

Incremental Improvements Seen Since 2005 Survey

The 2007 survey results show indicators of health with regards to staff development, in the following areas:

- Increased Participation in Staff Development Activities
- Evidence of More Support from Supervisors
- Supervisors Better Prepared for Role
- More Institutional Attention to Staff Development

Most notably, there was a 13% increase (from 35% to 48%) of respondents who reported having an individual development plan that they discussed with their supervisor.

Targets of Opportunity

Survey findings reveal that while there are overall improvements in staff development across the system, institutional attention to staff development varies widely with respect to campus staff development policies, use of professional development funds, sponsorship of campus-based professional development activities, and staff development planning at the campus level. To address these disparities, campuses' best practices should be shared.

While there are improvements in supervisory support for professional development and use of performance management methods, there is still room for growth in this area. Leadership development for supervisors and managers should continue to be a strong focus at the system and campus level.

Impact Areas for Improvement

Nearly 20% of respondents had ideas for improving staff and leadership development on their campus or within the MnSCU system.

Barriers to Training. Lack of both funding and time continue to be cited as the most common barriers to effective staff development on some campuses. Appropriate resources must be allocated at all levels: system, college and university, and work-unit/department.

Training Needs. Job-specific training still tops the list of desired training for most staff. Most job-specific training must be addressed at the work unit level, with appropriate resources allocated based on the employee's position description and individual development requirements. Commonly reported job-specific training includes computer skills training and ISRS training, which could be delivered more effectively if there were standard offerings across the system.

Communication. Even when training is available, respondents report that it does not always get communicated effectively to staff across the system. Additional methods should be explored for communicating these professional development opportunities to all staff.

Tuition Waiver. As in 2005, respondents commented that tuition waiver should be accessible to all employees whether they work at two-year or four-year institutions. Survey responses will be forwarded to Labor Relations for their use in developing a tuition waiver strategy.

Next Steps Results will be communicated to all system staff in April 2008, with recommendations forwarded to the Human Resources Committee of the Leadership Council.

INTRODUCTION

During December 2007, the Office of the Chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system conducted a survey to assess professional development needs of system staff and administrators. The Organizational Effectiveness Research Group (OERG) at Minnesota State University, Mankato provided survey consultation and administration. Staff of the Human Resources Division, Office of the Chancellor managed the project.

Survey invitations were sent to 7,352 staff (except faculty represented by IFO and MSCF) from 32 colleges and universities across the state of Minnesota. This is a report of opinions and needs of staff in five key areas:

- Types of training needed by individual staff
- Individual access to existing training
- Money spent for individual professional development
- Use of individual development plans in performance appraisals
- Supervisory and institutional support for staff development

The web-based survey began on November 26, 2007 and ended on December 7, 2007. The overall response rate was 46%, with a total of 3,382 surveys completed.

DEMOGRAPHICS

While there are slight variances among respondents from each institution, following are demographic highlights of the 3,382 employees who answered the survey. The demographics of the 2007 survey respondents were similar to those of the 2005 survey respondents.

- The following bargaining units and plans were represented among survey respondents: AFSCME, MAPE, MGEC, MMA, MSUAASF, MNA, Commissioner's Plan, Classified Managerial Plan, and the Administrator's Plan.
- Almost 70% of the respondents were from AFSCME (44.3%) and MAPE (25.2%).
- Women comprise 62% of staff surveyed, but represented 70% of the respondents.
- Within the system, 8% of staff report belonging to an underrepresented racial or ethnic group; they represented 11% of the respondents.
- 72% of the respondents indicated that their age was over 40 years old.
- More than half the respondents have been employed by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for fewer than 10 years.

For more specific demographic information, please refer to the bar graph report of the survey results in Appendix II.

OVERALL FINDINGS

The survey results show important indicators of health with regards to staff development and evidence of incremental improvements since the 2005 survey. Improvements include increased participation in staff development activities, more support from supervisors, and more institutional attention given to staff development on campuses. While there was little change in performance management efforts, there was a notable increase of staff who reported having an individual development plan that they discussed with their supervisor.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Over 80% of respondents attended some type of staff development activity during the past year. This is a 4% increase from 2005. The top five types of training reported in 2007 were:

- Campus professional development day/staff development day (50.4%)
- Computer skills training (28.9%)
- Required training (safety, blood borne pathogens, etc.) (26.1%)
- Job-specific training (22.8%)
- Diversity training (19.6%)

Almost a quarter of the respondents (24.6%) reported attending four or more professional development activities in the last year. This represented an increase of 9% from the 2005 survey. There was an 8% increase of those who attended campus professional development days or staff development days. Also noted is the reverse phenomenon: an 8% decrease in those who attended diversity training and a 7% decrease in those who attended job-specific training.

EVIDENCE OF MORE SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISORS

There are several notable differences in the data about supervisory behavior in the 2007 survey. Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) agreed or strongly agreed that their immediate supervisor encourages staff development opportunities. This is a 7% increase from 2005. Responses also showed an 8% increase in supervisors who assist employees who ask for help in finding appropriate training.

SUPERVISORS BETTER PREPARED FOR ROLE

Nearly 11% of respondents who are supervisors reported attending the supervisory training program introduced in 2006, *The Art and Science of Supervision*. This is currently mandatory for all new MMA supervisors, with voluntary participation from supervisors covered by other contracts and plans. New supervisors indicated that coaching from a supervisor was a main resource used by new supervisors to acclimate to their position (up 12% from 2005), along with reading books (up 8% from 2005). Also up by 8%, were those supervisors who said that they were likely to participate in supervisory/managerial development activities on an annual basis, bringing the total to 67%. This would seem to show that supervisory training has had some impact.

MORE INSTITUTIONAL ATTENTION TO STAFF DEVELOPMENT

There were some incremental changes in responses about institutional support of staff development. Agreement with the statement “My institution/workplace encourages staff development opportunities” increased by 4%, and agreement with the statement “My campus hosts staff development or professional development days” increased by 6%. More respondents reported that

“Adequate attention is given to staff development at my institution” (up 8% from 2005), but at the same time, more than half the respondents either disagreed with the statement (24%) or were neutral (29%).

Evidence from the individual college and university survey reports showed that institutional attention to staff development varies widely across the institutions. From those institutions that showed strong evidence of supporting staff development, there were resulting positive comments from survey respondents as noted below.

- I've very pleased with the direction that MSCTC has taken for staff development. With the Student Services reorganization at MSCTC, extensive training is being offered/required.
- It is great that MCTC recently started [a] tuition reimbursement program and \$350 staff development fund. Thank you!
- Century IT is wonderful!
- NHCC does an exceptional job in this area
- The Leadership Institute at MSU, Mankato developed by Lori Lamb (Director of HR) has been an excellent professional development opportunity. It allows faculty and staff (across disciplines, departments, and bargaining units) to come together and understand how to develop leadership skills at our institution
- Our college has done a great job of improving staff and leadership development over the years

Comments also reflected institutions where there is less institutional support for staff development as noted below.

- The woeful lack of staff development at _____ is one of the reasons that I am leaving the institution. As a new employee, it was very frustrating to receive absolutely no training whatsoever. You have to learn by making mistakes instead.
- I don't feel that support staff at our institution are encourage or provided with staff development opportunities.
- Training in the admissions area is practically non-existent. I cannot comprehend how this place manages to function with such inadequacies.
- There are many talks about the subject of staff development, but there is little being done within the institution to develop a comprehensive staff development program/policy, allocate required funds, and to get the program off the ground.

LITTLE CHANGE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

Similar to 2005, 70% of 2007 survey respondents reported that they had received a performance evaluation in the last year. Nearly 70% of staff agree that they have a current job description with clear performance expectations. Still a concern is the fact that 30% reported not having clear performance expectations.

While less than half (48%) of respondents reported having an individual development plan that they discussed with their supervisor, there was a 12% increase in staff reporting having one, which is a notable improvement.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

The 2007 survey generated 623 comments from respondents.¹ Themes in the comments continue to be similar: many recommendations for improving staff development at the institution and the system level, appreciation for particular programs and conferences, and articulation of most-needed training. Common barriers to training continue to be funding, time, or understaffing. Tuition waiver continues to be a sore point with employees, with many respondents recommending that the tuition waiver be made available for all employees at all institutions across the system, removing limitations between access to two-year and four-year institutions. Communication has emerged as an important issue as more professional development opportunities are available.

The most frequent comment themes are highlighted below, in the following categories: 1) positive comments; 2) barriers to training; 3) training needs; 4) communication; 5) tuition waiver; and 6) innovative ideas.

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- I am very happy to see the effort that is being put into staff development. There has been a definite improvement since the last survey. Thank you.
- My staff loved the AFSCME conference last spring and there was an Accounts Receivable Symposium put on by IT over the summer that was really good. Providing opportunities for people from multiple campuses to get together and compare notes and hear best practices is the best training....
- I think that the MnSCU supervisory training is a great asset that is provided to us
- Trainings with the MnSCU system office (IT) are very helpful and informative. They are the most beneficial trainings I have been in.
- I am new to Minnesota and MnSCU—the training offered by the Office of the Chancellor has been very helpful and well done. I've been happy with the professional presentations and their applicability to my work.
- Funding from MSUAASF for professional development opportunities is very helpful.
- Luoma [Leadership Academy] is a great program—keep it up!
- The MnSCU system is a great place to work. The Human Resources conferences that I have attended have always been a great learning and networking experience. The organizers and presenters are very professional and really do care about giving us the best information in an upbeat and fun way.
- Encouraging employees to better their skills is good for the institution and the individual. MnSCU's commitment is appreciated.

THEME 1: BARRIERS TO TRAINING

In response to the 2005 survey report, the attention to staff development has risen in importance in many institutions and in the system. Barriers still exist for many staff in accessing the training they need. Most specifically, there were 66 comments about lack of funding and 40 comments related to lack of time or inadequate staffing to cover someone's work while they attend training.

¹ See Table 1 in Appendix I for a full listing of themes in the comments.

Here are some sample comments:

Funding

- AFSCME members should be allowed personal development funds through HR or somewhere to enable us to attend trainings when no other funds are available.
- In my case, it is all about money. There is never any money to do any training and since I am in the MAPE bargaining unit, I have no professional advancement money. There is a classified training fund, but it isn't able to help a whole lot.
- When I worked in the community, I rarely had to pay for CEUs myself. Since working for MnSCU, I have had to pay for almost all my CEUs and renewals myself.
- Need much more funding for professional development. Our department is student fee funded with many professionals employed who need to keep licenses, skills current. Funding is very inadequate....and we have had several professionals turn us down on job offers as a result.
- The campuses need monetary support budgeted from MnSCU to provide additional staff development for many of the classified positions.
- More money is needed at the campus level for professional development.

Time, Understaffed

- I believe that we are very short staffed and that it is difficult to utilize these opportunities when it would require an absence from the department.
- I have enough opportunities, what I need is time.
- I have too many short deadlines to take part in anything outside the office with the exception of an hour or two. That's why a trainer coming to our office to tutor us on new software and applications would be valuable.
- I am so short staffed, that it is difficult to let those whom I supervise have time off to attend training sessions or to be on college committees. I cover when one is gone, but then my work backs up.
- If we were better staffed there would be more time for us to do development.

THEME 2: MOST NEEDED TRAINING

In the 2005 survey, job-specific training was noted as the most-needed training and remains so in 2007. More than 98% of respondents stated that job-specific training is important or very important to improve their own development and to contribute to the success of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. In many cases, lack of job-specific training creates a threat to the system. Staff in particular areas are not able to keep up with required credentials or new knowledge in their fields. Two types of job-specific training needs cited most frequently were ISRS training and general computer skills training.

Here are some representative comments:

- Our professionals require a predetermined number of hours of education to keep their licensure. Our department does not have enough funds to help support this and it is a

struggle every year for these professionals to have enough money through our department to maintain their licenses.

- I would like to explore job training with other locksmiths in the MnSCU system.
- We need beginning accounting for new office managers and more training on the ISRS purchasing system.
- Bookstore staff from all MnSCU institutions need to gather together for training, peer knowledge exchanges and support.
- Please offer computer training for staff (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Visio, Adobe, and Dreamweaver).
- We need basic training on systems such as ISRS, SCUPPS. These are very complex systems and not used by other state agencies.
- Would like more in-depth computer and ISRS training. We never seem to get enough, especially with all changes with the current computer software systems.

From the survey results 89% of respondents said that supervisory or management training is also important for the system to perform at its best. In the open-ended comments, this was amplified by 46 comments about general dissatisfaction with the performance of supervisors, managers, or administrators. Here is a sampling:

- My supervisor has very few interpersonal skills. I try to engage in conversation regarding work. I have been YELLED at in hallways. I have been belittled by _____ in meetings.
- We don't get much if any guidance from management. There's no structure or process in place here. We're pretty much on our own from day to day.
- I think that before an area "manager" or "supervisor" gets hired for those positions, they should have those skills. I used to love my job, coming to work. Now I dread it. I still love my job, but the office manager is severely lacking in effective management skills...
- Supervisors need to be evaluated on their supervision and conducting annual reviews should be part of that; it has been more than two years since my last review.
- Please!! Make supervisors of people take "how to supervise" classes. I've asked and asked for this to happen and my request falls on deaf ears...My supervisor constantly tells me they don't have time to supervise—we are all busy, but we all need to do our job.

These findings support further leadership development for supervisors and managers, continuing as a strong focus both at the system and campus level. Accountability for supervision in performance evaluations would also be indicated as a continuing need.

THEME 3: COMMUNICATION

Only 28% of respondents were familiar with the employee development philosophy for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, first developed and communicated in 2006. Those who knew about the philosophy statement heard from their supervisor (24%), their HR office (29%) or their college/university newsletter (23%). The communication theme was noted in 34 comments that cited the need for better communication about where and when training is offered on their campus or within the system.

Here is a sampling:

- If all the workshop choices listed exist, we don't know about them. There must be a better way to disseminate the information about these workshops.
- All employees should be made aware of opportunities—not just selected departments or those working directly for administration
- Clearer instructions [are needed] as to who will benefit from each area of training offered---sometimes it is hard to decipher if one should attend or not.
- It is obvious that we need more information on what is available for employees.
- Please make this information available to be displayed on union bulletin boards.
- We need to be better informed of any training, conferences, or any other opportunities to participate in order to enhance our knowledge and skills in our jobs.

THEME 4: TUITION WAIVER

While there was no specific survey question about tuition waiver, nearly 50 respondents specifically commented on it. Only 4% of respondents reported using the tuition waiver during the past year to take individual courses and 3.2% reported using tuition waiver for pursuit of a degree. Yet the way this benefit is made available bothers many respondents. Most respondents recommended that the tuition waiver be made available for all employees at all institutions across the system, removing limitations between access to two-year and four-year institutions. The tone of the comments shows that the waiver as presently made available in some bargaining unit contracts reflects how employees feel valued or not valued as a part of the system. The delineation of differences among employees as to who can qualify for tuition waiver based upon where they work reinforces perceived inequities among staff. Also, many respondents suggested that tuition waiver be available upon hire or after a probationary period, rather than requiring a three-year waiting period, as in several bargaining unit contracts.

Here are samples of representative comments:

- Tuition waivers should be available for all institutions. If you work at a technical college you should be able to use the waiver at a 4-year institution. This would enable supervisors who have their bachelor degrees to get their masters, making them eligible for promotion to the next level. At this institution, I will need to have an MBA to be promoted.
- When this survey was last administered, I mentioned the importance of staff (not family members) being able to use the tuition waiver benefit after six months of employment rather than having to wait 3 years. I also mentioned that tuition benefits should be able to be used at any 2-year, 4-year, or technical institution. This still hasn't been addressed. It seems to me that...families should not receive tuition waivers before full-time staff.
- Currently, our tuition waiver only covers 2-year institutions. It would be nice if it allowed us to pursue higher degrees and provide a waiver at all institutions in MnSCU, even if it's just for the employee (not family).
- Pay for the applied doctorate degree for staff. Cut the benefits for children of employees to 50% coverage.
- I think the educational benefit within MnSCU should be changed to allow employees to attend ANY institution in the system. If the system were really invested in our educational

development, they would foster growth by expanding our educational opportunities in the system so that we can continue to advance and better serve them.

- If we are indeed one system, then employees should be able to use their tuition waiver at any MnSCU institution.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

More than 130 respondents generated recommendations of some type related to employee development, many of them innovative ideas for improving staff and leadership development on their campuses and within the system.

Following are ideas that may warrant incorporation into the current system-wide plan for staff and leadership development.

- I would like to see more leadership development on individual campuses to encourage faculty to consider becoming academic deans.
- One component of a president's evaluation should be a measure based on their degree of support and promoting of professional development on their campuses.
- User chat groups (like anyone work in Term Course and Curriculum modules) would be helpful. Knowing the practice of other institutions could be valuable.
- Would like more training on issues related to supervising student workers.
- [Office of the Chancellor Training and Development] staff needs to be enlarged—need more trainers to do all the training we would like this area to cover for our supervisory staff.
- We need safety and emergency response training for everyone in the campus community.
- I would suggest more half day sessions for supervisors such as the coaching session.
- I would like to see more cross training of positions especially in facilities that could lead to other licensing possibilities and other opportunities in the system, such as apprentice opportunities or collaboration with plumbers unions or electrical unions.
- Some of our members have gone to the Luoma Leadership Academy and I hear that they promote transformative leadership—these kinds of trainings should be offered on a wider scale to mid-level managers on our campus.
- Contract with local customized training unit to bring in resources rather than sending staff to more expensive outside training whenever possible.
- All staff need staff development opportunities for renewal and advancement. Staff and faculty development could benefit from being under a larger umbrella of Professional and Organizational Development.
- Mentoring opportunities, chances to serve on other campuses or within the Office of the Chancellor through job exchange programs, and genuine leadership development are truly needed, particularly in times of resource scarcity, and particularly as more of the workforce starts to retire.
- Make a certain number of training sessions mandatory, not optional, each year. That would require each employee to meet some MINIMUM standard.
- Staff and leadership development can be supplemented with a thorough library of written resources, perhaps some webinars and /or online courses as well as seminar and conference opportunities.
- Provide career planning/development activities specifically designed to promote employees in their position classification steps.

CONCLUSION

The high response rate to the survey and the numerous written comments clearly affirm strong interest in staff development. Survey findings point to several targets of opportunity.

1. Maintain and enhance current development programs.

- Continue to support existing leadership development programs, such as the Luoma Leadership Academy and the Art and Science of Supervision.
- Continue to support Divisional Conferences across the system (e.g., in Academic and Student Affairs, Human Resources, Information Technology, Finance and Facilities, Development).
- Continue support of the Annual Frontline Conference (for AFSCME and MAPE employees)
- Use current resources and forums to respond to development needs and succession within divisional areas.
- Expand supervisory and managerial development programs to meet current needs of new and veteran supervisors and managers.

2. Improve training opportunities at both the campus and system level.

- Find ways to close the gaps in staff development among institutions in the system.
- Increase access to ISRS and other systems training for employees and standardize documentation and curriculum at the system level.
- Address the need for computer skills training at the institutional level.
- Address staff development funding needs at the campus level.

3. Continue encouragement of annual performance evaluations and individual development plans

- At the system level, explore use of web-based performance management systems.
- At the campus level, build accountability and reporting for performance evaluation completion.
- Encourage integration of individual development plans into annual performance evaluations.

4. Improve communication at the campus and system level.

- Continue to build upon system's training and development web resources on the Human Resources Division web site.
- Create communications that help employees find appropriate training.
- Publicize the System-wide Training and Registration Site (STARS) and encourage its use at the system and campus level.
- Encourage human resources professionals to post professional development opportunities on campus bulletin boards whenever possible.

5. Recommend review of tuition waiver.

- Forward survey comments on tuition waiver to Labor Relations for their use in working with the Leadership Council on a tuition waiver strategy.
- Forward survey comments to HR Committee of the Leadership Council for discussion about current tuition waiver benefits in employee contracts and plans.

NEXT STEPS

Results of the system-wide staff development survey will be shared in April and May 2008 with leaders in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and will be made more broadly available online in late May 2008 at

http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/training_and_development/staff_development_needs.htm

As in 2005, institution-specific reports will be sent to Chief Human Resources Officers at the colleges and universities for discussion and use.

The Staff and Leadership Development Steering Committee, in consultation with the Human Resource Committee of the Leadership Council, will address staff development needs identified in the survey in the annual work plan. Resulting action items will also be integrated into the current 2006-2010 Staff and Leadership Development Action Plan.

Feedback from Minnesota State College and Universities employees regarding the survey report and work plan development is welcomed and can be directed to Anita Rios at anita.rios@so.mnscu.edu

APPENDIX I

Table 1. Themes from Open-Ended Comments

Theme	Number	Percent
Recommendations for Improvement	135	21.7%
Funding	66	10.6%
Tuition Waiver	47	7.5%
Dissatisfaction with supervisors, managers, or administration	46	7.4%
Positive Comments about Staff Development on Campuses or in the System	42	6.7%
Lack of time/lack of staffing to attend training	40	6.4%
Better Communication about Training Needed	34	5.5%
Lack of advancement opportunities	29	4.7%
ISRS/SCUPPS/BRIO training needed	25	4.0%
Limitations or inequities across Bargaining Units (mostly MAPE, MSUAASF)	25	4.0%
Campus Development Days	25	4.0%
Role of HR	23	3.7%
Lack of campus training	15	2.4%
Computer training needed	13	2.1%
Travel issues/location of training	12	1.9%
Orientation	12	1.9%
Professional Memberships/Credentials	10	1.6%
Training not supported/allowed by supervisor	10	1.6%
Alternate Training Delivery: use of ITV, online: webex, etc.	8	1.3%
HR training needed	3	0.5%
AFSCME issues	2	0.3%
Committee memberships	1	0.2%
	623	100.0%

Source: 2007 Staff and Leadership Development Survey, Human Resources Division