

Human Resources Progress Update

A New Year Begins!

It's A New Year!

Welcome to another issue in a continuing series of Human Resources Progress Updates. Our goal is to give you information about issues and initiatives that matter to you most. The last issue covered our progress at the University of Saskatchewan related to reaching the goals outlined in “Renewing the Dream” - supporting the changing priorities at our university, shifting the current status quo, and describing our evolving labour relations environment. This edition of the Progress Update continues to report to you on current initiatives and results – most recently the annual Employee Opinion Survey. We are also providing information about the University’s Representative Workforce Strategy and how Diversity initiatives support the Strategic Plan. This issue also gives you a high level overview of the trends from workplace assessments conducted across campus over the last several years. We’re always looking for your input and feedback and hope to hear from you – please call us or email us at HR anytime!

Barb Daigle
Associate Vice-President
Human Resources

Mark Your Calendars!

Employee Opinion Survey Forums

12 - 1 pm, Convocation Hall
February 2 and February 16
March 16 and April 13

Come to any session and tell us what you think!

RSVP: sandra.friesen@usask.ca or 966-6245

[See the inside spread of this issue for the Results of the Survey.]

Your ideas, suggestions and comments are always welcome.

**Please email Human Resources at
HR_progress_update_feedback@usask.ca**

**For more information about HR programs
at the U of S visit www.usask.ca/hrd**

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Employees Speak... *and we are listening!*

The Employee Opinion Survey Results

Last May/June the first annual Employee Opinion Survey was sent out across the campus to all employees. 1,122 staff across units and staff groups responded. Considering that this survey was completed during a time of significant change, the response rate was excellent. More importantly, the responses were significant and important for planning purposes. Thank you to the many employees who participated in the survey and who, through their responses, are helping to build a solid foundation for change from which we can move forward together.

The survey provided an opportunity for employees to share information that will help us to work together toward improved work environments.

Generally, employees want to contribute to the success of the organization they work for and they represent a significant strategic value. One of the ways we can ensure we understand employees' attitudes and perceptions and affect employee satisfaction in a positive way is to create mechanisms to open dialogue – to ask and listen to feedback, and to act upon the results. The survey results will assist us in:

- Identifying the gaps between the current environment and the workplace described in “Renewing the Dream”
- Providing valuable information to support the development of programs and services that meet our goal of establishing healthy, productive and diverse work environments
- Clarifying the challenges that need our collective focus to support the advancement of our University
- Providing a baseline against which to measure future progress in pursuit of those goals

The University of Saskatchewan made a commitment as outlined in “Renewing the Dream” to “...*establish a healthy and productive work environment, characterized by teamwork, open communication and trust, in which employees at all levels have a strong sense of belonging... We will continue to be driven by principles of human dignity and fairness in all we do, including strategies for equity and diversity, in education, employment and all our activities.*”

We are committed to openly sharing and broadly communicating the survey results and engaging in dialogue to identify possible solutions to the issues raised. A summary report will be shared through a number of communication forums and committees. Together we will draw out recommendations to address the gaps identified.

Simply put, in order to know what employees' attitudes and perceptions are: ask them! We did, and the results of the first annual employee opinion survey will help guide us.
- Barb Daigle

Opportunities:

63% of us feel a more diverse workforce would be beneficial to the future of the University

Challenges:

Work-life balance is a barrier to being fully engaged and successful at work for 40% of us.

Only 40% of us think that we can get a better job based on our skills and 57% of us think that getting ahead is based on who you know

The Results:

The survey asked questions in 3 key areas: equity/diversity, employee development and engagement and alignment with University values. This summary provides combined 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses, and combined 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses. This is just a summary of the responses and we encourage you to view the full report at <http://www.usask.ca/hrd/survey>

Equity/Diversity:

Questions were asked to measure employee perceptions on fairness or equity, and whether or not diversity is appreciated and valued in the workplace. Here's what responding employees had to say:

- 56% agree that they are aware of the University's diversity strategies
- 63% agree that a more diverse workforce would be beneficial to the future of the University
- 51% agree that under-represented groups promoted into supervisory positions are treated with respect
- 95% did not report having difficulty accepting direction from any particular demographic group. 4.8% of respondents (54 staff) said that they had encountered such difficulties
- 66% believe that any individual has an equal opportunity for employment at the U of S, regardless of demographic make-up
- 45% believe that the U of S has done more than it should to provide equitable opportunities for identified groups
- The top five barriers* to being fully engaged and successful at work were identified as:
 - Work life balance (40%)
 - Work volume (34%)
 - Conflict in the workplace (24%)
 - Leadership (23%)
 - Workplace relationships (22%)

Employee Development and Engagement:

Questions were asked to measure perception of whether employees feel appreciated, valued and recognized. Those employees that responded said:

- 57% agree that getting ahead in this organization is based on who you know
- 56% feel recognized for a job well done
- 39% believe that they have a chance to get a better job at the University based on their skills
- 76% agree that they know what is expected of them at work

- 57% agree that they have the materials, equipment, information and/or resources they need to do their work well
- 68% agree that they get a real sense of achievement from their work
- 43% agree that they had received recent recognition or praise for good work – total disagreement was 41.1%
- 73% agree that someone at work seems to care about them as a person
- 60% agree that someone at work encourages their development
- 60% also agree that their opinions seem to count
- 60% agree that the purpose of the University and/or their work unit makes them feel their job is important
- 75% agree that their coworkers are committed to doing quality work
- 55% identified that someone at work had talked to them about their performance in the last six months
- 69% agree that they had opportunities at work to learn and grown in the prior year

Alignment with University Values:

Questions were asked to measure employee perception of workplace culture, and here's what they had to say:

- 58% agree that we are honest, supportive and sensitive in our communications
- 71% agree that we support innovation, creativity and risk-taking
- 63% agree that we learn from our failures
- 63% agree that we celebrate our successes
- 54% agree that we are fair and forthright in our dealings
- 42% agree that we confront problems and issues openly and directly
- 48% agree that we cultivate an environment of collegiality and trust

Diversity – A Representative Workforce Strategy

What does it mean?

A Representative Workforce Strategy is based on the principle that all levels of a workforce should be representative of the community it operates within. It focuses on long-term climate, culture and diversity, operating on the principles of equal access to opportunity and recognizing the value of diverse individuals.

How can we do this?

The goals of the Strategic Directions, which recognize that the University needs a diverse employee population, can be met through the ‘people’ strategies outlined in the Human Resources plan, such as:

- Re-examining recruitment and selection processes and re-defining job qualifications
- Introducing a performance framework which rewards success based on merit and includes recognition of cultural competencies
- Conducting workplace assessments and employee opinion surveys to assess and measure cultural change
- Ensuring senior leadership commitment
- Ensuring a coordinated effort to support existing successful work as well as new programs and initiatives
- Recognizing and acting upon opportunities as presented by the Aboriginal communities of Saskatchewan

The Employee Opinion Survey results outlined in this Progress Update help measure the reactions or changes in the organization’s culture and will serve as a baseline from which future change can be measured.

Next Steps include:

- Gather feedback and recommendations from the Campus Community and the Diversity Committees to formulate action plans
- Work with Diversity Committees on implementation of plans
- Conduct Employee Opinion Survey 2006
- Hold 2nd Annual Diversity Day Forum

Workplace Assessments and Employee Opinion Survey Show Similar Issues

A Workplace Assessment is a proactive tool used to take a closer look at our organization with a goal to create, enable and support a culture as outlined in “Renewing the Dream”. It examines the elements of our workplaces that contribute to the overall culture: Vision and Business Plan; Culture/Climate; Systems/Process, and Structure/Accountability. Over the past two years, Human Resources has conducted 26 Workplace Assessments across the Colleges and Units. Some of the issues emerging from the Workplace Assessments can be best summarized as:

- Demonstrated commitment and loyalty to the workplace/U of S
- Increasing work volume
- Commitment to doing quality work
- Desire for continued improvement
- A need for leadership development
- Appreciation and recognition
- Role and work assignment clarity
- Difficulties in connecting the work of the unit/department to the U of S Strategic Plan

In the Next Issue:

Stories and Profiles from across the campus!