

University to review crisis prevention and response

- by Richard Florizone



As announced in the May 4 issue of On Campus News, an Assessment of Crisis Prevention and Response at the University of Saskatchewan is underway and stakeholder interviews have already been conducted.

The Assessment will be prepared for Richard Florizone, Vice-President, Finance & Resources, by co-leaders Barb Daigle, Associate Vice-President, Human Resources, and David Hannah, Associate Vice-President, Student and Enrollment Services. The preliminary recommendations for improvement should be ready later this fall.

"The safety and security of students and staff are of primary concern to the University of Saskatchewan," reads the terms of reference for the Assessment. "While no institution can guarantee the safety and security of a single individual, the University of Saskatchewan is committed to doing the best we can – delivering a safety and security system that is consistent with best practices at other institutions with similar resources and contexts. We are also committed to continuously improving our safety and security practices."

Events that contributed to the decision to conduct the Assessment included the severe blizzard in January and the sighting of a potential gunman on campus in April, in the

immediate aftermath of the shootings at Virginia Tech.

"Overall, the University has a good record of responding to safety and security crises," Richard Florizone said. "For example, during the blizzard of January 2007 services were provided to feed and house stranded students and staff. Similarly, the recent sighting in April 2007 of a potential gunman on campus demonstrated our strong working relationship with Saskatoon Police Services.

"However, both of these incidents also highlighted some areas where we could be stronger, including coordination among different university units in a crisis situation, and communicating with the broader campus in emergency situations. We have many talented and capable individuals and units managing our safety and security environment, but we could do a better job of coordinating and communicating."

The overall assessment is highly consultative, involving interviews with staff and students, plus review of the debriefing reports prepared after the recent incidents. The objective of this assessment is to recommend improvements to the overall coordinated response to crisis/emergency situations to ensure maximum efficiency and

effectiveness, while minimizing the University's risk. The end product will include the following five elements:

- **A conceptual framework** to distinguish the types of incidents, crises, emergencies and disasters that are anticipated at an institution like the University of Saskatchewan.
- **A summary of our current governance (policies, processes, committees, roles and responsibilities) of crises.** A number of policies and committees exist to address issues around safety and security; however, the linkages and authority need to be made clear to all involved.
- **A review of best practices** to incorporate the lessons learned at other universities and organizations.
- **An assessment of the key strengths** (what is working) **and weaknesses** (what is not working) in our overall governance of crises, with specific examples.
- **Recommendations** to build on strengths and to shore-up weaknesses, including policies, committees, roles and communications.

Human Resources Update

September 2007

Employee Opinion Survey Consultation and Action Planning Underway

2006 Employee Opinion Survey Results

"The second annual Employee Opinion Survey provides a rich source of information that will help the university ensure positive work environments," said Surinder Saini, the HR Division's Director of Information Management.

Compilation and analysis of the survey results has now been completed, with the final report posted on the HR website. The results are based on 1,581 responses received from November 1-17, 2006. This was an increase of 459 people from the 2005 survey.

"The first survey set a benchmark against which we could compare future results," said Saini. Through an annual survey, we can measure progress in different areas. In the second survey, we included more demographic questions, which helps us to focus in on the opinions of distinct groups of employees. That, combined with the higher response rate, adds up to a very rich source of data."

The year-to-year comparison of the 2006 and 2005 survey results shows consistency in most areas, adding credibility to the results.

"Survey respondents were not randomly selected, but indicate a fairly random distribution. While there was a good survey response rate, it is not a high enough response rate, in light of self-selection, to reliably generalize all results to the population as a whole."

Respondents completed the survey online, with no password or personal identification required. For those without computers at their work stations, access points were available at various sites on campus. A few departments printed out hard copies to ensure that employees could participate. The way the results are handled makes it impossible to trace responses to specific individuals.

"Through keeping the responses confidential and acting quickly on the results we hope to build trust that will

Watch for the 2007 Employee Opinion Survey, which will be across the campus in November. We encourage even greater participation than last year to help ensure that even more Colleges and Units will have specific

results to consider. These results help Colleges and Units to plan better, and adapt to the emerging needs of employees. Individual responses are confidential and results are reported by work group only.

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Your comments, ideas and suggestions are always welcome! Please send by email to HR_progress_update_feedback@usask.ca; or by mail to Human Resources.

2006 Employee Opinion Survey Results

Reasons to Celebrate!

Equity - Diversity	Employee Development and Engagement	Alignment with University Values	Areas of Action
92% have no difficulty accepting direction from any identified demographic group. 75% agree that a more diverse workforce would be beneficial to the future of the University	75% agree they know what is expected of them at work. 65% get a real sense of achievement from their work.	57% agreed we are honest, supportive and sensitive in our communications. 59% agreed we celebrate our successes.	40% identified work volume as a barrier to being fully engaged and successful at work. 53% agree that getting ahead in this organization is based on who you know. 51% agreed that they were recognized for a job well done.

encourage more and more employees to participate in the future," said Saini.

The results of the 2006 Employee Opinion Survey were collected, analyzed, and reviewed with Senior Administration and leaders across campus. HR consultants have been meeting with leaders across campus about the results specific to Colleges and Units.

The issues identified in the first survey led to the introduction of a number of initiatives. These included Diversity Day which focused on education and celebration of diversity on campus and highlighted the importance of work/life balance; further development of job profiles for staff outlining key competencies and accountabilities; increased use of 360 degree feedback tools for individuals in leadership roles; workshops to help individuals enhance their personal effectiveness; and on-going workplace assessments to identify and address workplace issues. In addition, Human Resources staff continued to work with colleges and units to promote positive work environments.

The 2006 survey results will lead to more action – at the college and unit levels.

Following are some of the key results within the three main areas of analysis:

Equity - Diversity

A highlight of the survey was the continued strong support of respondents for diversity at the University.

Only 7.6% of respondents indicated that they have difficulty accepting direction from a supervisor who is a member of an identified demographic group, meaning 92.4% of employees have no such difficulty.

The percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel a more diverse workforce would be beneficial to the future of the University," rose to 75.4% in 2006 from 63.7% the previous year.

Work volume continues to be an area of concern. The number of respondents identifying work volume as a barrier to their being fully

engaged and successful at work rose to 39.9% in 2006 from 33.5% in 2005. A further analysis of the results shows that work volume generally becomes more of an issue as employees age, with a slight drop for those in the 50 to 59 years of age group. It is an issue most for respondents in the 40 to 49 year age category at 49.5%, and least for those under the age of 20 at 14.3%.

Employee Development and Engagement

Most respondents know what is expected of them in their jobs and feel valued.

The number of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, "I know what is expected of me at work" was 75.1% in 2006, almost identical to the 75.8% in 2005. 64.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they get a real sense of achievement from their work, compared to 68.0% in 2005. A strong majority of respondents (69.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that someone at work seems to care about them as a person, down from 72.9% in 2005. And 56.7% agreed or

strongly agreed that their opinions seem to count, compared to 60.3% the previous year.

The results for three questions pointed to the need for increased emphasis on employee feedback.

A bare majority of respondents (51.2%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel I am recognized for a job well done," down from 55.8% in 2005. Only 41.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work," about the same as the 42.6% recorded in 2005. And 50.6% agreed or strongly agreed that someone at work had talked to them about their performance in the last six months, down from 54.9% in 2005. In all three cases, the results showed that feedback declines as length of service increases.

A majority (53%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Getting ahead in this organization is based on who you know." Although this was down slightly from 56.9% in 2006, it still raises a concern. Persons with disabilities more frequently agreed (83.9%) than other employees (54.1%). Respondents between the ages of 20 and 29 most frequently agreed (64.8%), while those under the age of 20 agreed least frequently (37.1%).

Alignment with University values

57.6% agreed or strongly agreed that we are honest, supportive and sensitive in our communications, virtually the same as the 57.5% in 2005.

Agreement rates for the statement, "We celebrate our successes," decreased to 58.9% in 2006 from 63.0% the previous year.

Only 38.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that we confront problems and issues openly and directly, compared to 41.8% in 2005.

Results from the 2006 survey can also be found at <http://www.usask.ca/hrd/survey/index.php>

