

Human Resources Progress Update

Supporting the Changing University

The President recently reminded us, that at the end of the 20th century, our performance as a medical-doctoral institution was not what it should have been, nor what it had been, in previous decades. Great unevenness characterized our efforts, with some units excelling, others balancing their efforts, and still others lagging on several fronts.

This led to a strategic planning exercise in 2001 which was an executive-sponsored / bottom-up exercise. This came at a time when there was a strong appetite for renewal and a sense that the status quo was dangerous given profound changes in our immediate environment.

The Strategic Directions published in 2002 received great buy-in and support across the campus. It includes four key directions that require balance and commitment. Each one of those directions requires us all to do things differently – different programs, different priorities, different structures, and different practices.

The Human Resources Division (HRD) and other units were given a mandate to support the University's Strategic Directions.

In 2002, in response to the Strategic Directions, the HRD conducted a critical assessment and began an internal

transformation and renewal to improve our performance and deliver effective consultation on leading edge human resource practices.

This is an anniversary – it was a year ago when HRD celebrated and highlighted its internal transformation.

From 2002 until 2004 we focused on ensuring HRD's work place was positive, made efforts to improve our skills and become better problem solvers, and better aligned our

services with the University's needs. That meant adopting a more open, innovative, professional, and sometimes even bold approach. As the bar was set high, there were considerable challenges ahead.

HRD now has an improved capacity. We are better prepared to work with colleges and administrative units to help realize your goals.

"The Human Resources Division is continuing to move in the right direction – supporting the University to make needed changes."

President Peter MacKinnon

Shifting the Status Quo

HRD staff are engaging people across the campus in discussions about people and environments. We believe in the University's need to move in a new direction and we know we have to do things differently. High performing organizations throughout the world set an example we can emulate.

We are committed to helping create healthy and positive work and learning environments where all of our faculty and staff feel healthy and engaged, have stimulating and manageable workloads, and have the personal capacity to lead and embrace change to support the goals of their departments, units, colleges and the University.

Every employee is critical to the success of the University in meeting the goals of the Strategic Directions and the University Plan. And everyone is involved somehow in

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Shifting the Status Quo (continued from page one)

changing practices or programs, particularly at this time in the University's history: "Our purpose here is clear: to become a more responsive, more flexible, cost-effective and well-managed institution, better able to attach our resource allocations to the highest possible institutional priorities." (*excerpt from "A Framework for Action", May 2004*).

As the status quo shifts and people are engaged in discussions about change, there are varied

reactions across the campus. We all need to find ways to support people, while building the capacity of the organization to master the changes necessary for our success.

Normal reactions to change take on different forms. ***It is important to understand the effect these initiatives have on people and assess whether we are collectively doing the right things to foster healthy and productive work environments.***

Evidence of Progress

While some changes are difficult, there have been many encouraging signs of progress:

- People are demonstrating a real desire to improve and prepare for continued challenges at the University.
- Despite our concerns about workloads and the negative effects of stress, our faculty and staff are performing at high levels, adapting to new technologies, and working extremely hard to make substantial changes within the institution.
- A number of workplace and climate assessments have been conducted across the organization to address and act on barriers to positive work environments.
- Deans and other leaders are modeling the development of a performance framework that defines leadership accountabilities and behaviours and includes 360 degree (upward, peer and supervisor) feedback.
- The Employee Opinion Survey results will be released this month. About 1200 employees responded to the first annual survey. As the results are disseminated, discussions will take place about how to address the top issues identified through the survey.
- Time and effort has been spent developing staff and rewarding or addressing performance.
- We are beginning to develop better processes to link pay and performance.

Effective leadership for the University's future is a collaborative enterprise. These are not just HRD issues, they belong to everyone, ultimately affecting the success of the University.

Employee Survey

In May 2005, an Employee Opinion Survey was sent to the University community. The responses will be released this month.

The survey asked employees to comment on the alignment of their work units to a set of value statements which appear below. These value statements were developed to promote positive work environments in support of the Strategic Directions.

- We are honest, supportive and sensitive in our communications.
- We respect and value the individual and cultural differences of people in our community.
- We support innovation, creativity and risk-taking.
- We learn from our failures and celebrate our successes.
- We are fair and forthright in all our dealings.
- We confront problems and issues openly and directly.

We welcome your feedback on these values and encourage you to e-mail us at

HR_progress_update_feedback
@usask.ca

An Evolving Labour Relations Environment

Discussions about changes to practices and programs will also take place at the collective bargaining tables. The University is bargaining with all of its unions this year. This will add pressure to the organization as the University and its unions seek to achieve a balance – to find solutions that balance the needs and expectations of all staff, and the goals of the University plan, with the effective use of the University's limited resources.

The University is committed to taking an interest-based problem solving approach to bargaining. We value our relationships with all our unions.

While we may have differences, we also have common interests to work toward: most importantly the

success of the University and its people.

We are focused on solving tough problems with respectful negotiating processes.

It is important that we plan in such a way that labour disputes resulting from bargaining do not significantly jeopardize our operations. To that end, the University is working on contingency plans. If there is any kind of job action, we will provide as much notice as possible. Frequent communications about the situation will be provided to the campus community through formal channels.

Our goal is to help find solutions to challenges in the organization, many of which are long standing.

We want to balance the needs and expectations of all staff, and the goals of the University Plan, with the effective use of the University's limited resources.

Future Topics in the Update Series

- A discussion of HR priorities
 - How we measure success
- Stories and profiles from across campus
- Workload issues and possible solutions
 - The Performance Framework
 - Health and Wellness initiatives
- Staff and leadership development
- Issues and trends from workplace assessments

In the Next Issue

Results of the Employee Opinion Survey

- Top issues
- Ongoing dialogue to generate solutions
- Improving the survey for next year

The Diversity Strategy

- Action Plan

Issues and trends from workplace assessments

To make the transformation and meet the goals of the Strategic Directions and University Plan, we need to create a culture that supports positive and healthy work environments and high performance goals at all levels.

*We welcome your feedback and suggestions for future updates.
Please contact us at: HR_progress_update_feedback@usask.ca*



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**For further information about HRD programs
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