

Human Resources *Update*

November 2008

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE VICE-PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES *The Value of Giving and Receiving Feedback*



Barb Daigle

In January 2007, the front page of the HR Update had a message from me called "Reflections and Resolutions, Keep the ship on an even keel." That message had a lot of meaning for me as it was an open sharing of my reflections, personal struggles and resolutions to achieve a healthier life-style, and how work/life balance relates to the concept of a culture of high performance.

As I began to write the message for this issue, I considered what progress I made against my resolutions in 2007 - or in other words, how I "performed" in those areas! My conclusion: the past 20 months were professionally and personally perhaps the most challenging - and at the same time the most rewarding - of my career.

What was rewarding!

We continue to be in a time of transformative change at the University of Saskatchewan and it is rewarding to be part of that change. The role of Human Resources (HR) is to support change by fostering a culture of high performance. As I said in 2007 - and it is worth repeating - this does not mean working harder, faster, and longer. It means that at the University of Saskatchewan, we have opted for a culture of success. We share a responsibility to continuously review and promote the best people strategies which will support the directions of the University. This will ensure that work environments are positive, productive and healthy; that people are engaged

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and responsible for their own success; that we collaborate, appreciate and support the success of others; and as a result, are committed to the success of the University.

Based on these directions, there have been a number of rewarding aspects for me, personally, and for our HR staff over the last 20 months.

First, is that the role of the HR department, the content of the HR Plan, and the concepts of high performance and best-practice "people strategies" were widely and openly discussed and debated across the campus and in our local community. This was a rich opportunity for us to receive feedback, which came in many forms. As a result of the open debates and discussions, there appears to be an emerging understanding of the shared responsibility for effective "human resources" leadership across our campus community. The role of the HR department is to support and facilitate this shared responsibility by working with leaders, managers and supervisors, faculty and staff across the campus to promote success. A short summary of the HR Plan is provided following this message.

Second, is the content of the Integrated Plan. As a Human Resources professional, I have committed my career to helping organizations value and develop the potential of people. The University of Saskatchewan celebrates people in the Second Integrated Plan:

"A University that wants to distinguish itself internationally must create a vibrant intellectual community; it does so by attracting and developing outstanding people – faculty, students, and staff. It is self-evident that exceptional faculty and students make a great University, but it may be less obvious that faculty and students cannot excel without a diverse and talented cadre of professional and support staff sustaining them. The college and unit plans made it abundantly clear that the University of Saskatchewan's greatest asset is its people; they care about the University, they feel responsible for its future, and they are committed to and proud of doing their part to ensure that the University succeeds and thrives. Being successful requires an environment in which faculty, staff and students feel positive, supported, energized and valued and where individual priorities are generally aligned with the goals of the institution."

Excerpt from The Second Integrated Plan, Full Version, Page 21

Finally, the third rewarding aspect has been that of my own learning, personal development, and increased resiliency. The challenges of the last 20 months have led me to listen and learn, reflect on the feedback, and work on developing improved skills.

What were the challenges?

Some of the challenges were the same as the rewards! The past year came with a lot of feedback – some of it delivered in a very public way. Working through the feedback became a test of my convictions and commitment to the importance of being open to feedback in all forms and to providing critical feedback in a way that promotes learning and change.

As difficult as some of the feedback was to hear, I focused on learning from what I was hearing, and struggled on occasion to understand and appreciate some of the contradictory feedback. Eventually, I was able to accept the feedback as a genuine reaction of others to my actions.

So what did I learn? I learned that getting past how feedback is delivered in order to hear the feedback is not always easy, as our “defenses” kick in! I learned ways to identify and understand my defenses better in order to value and learn from feedback in any form. This will genuinely assist me and the staff in HR as we continue to offer training sessions in giving and receiving feedback.

Personally, I learned ways to increase my own resiliency. I learned to work through my reactions to a stressful time (as did many others). I examined my commitment to the continuous challenges of leading change when my progress with my resolutions for improved work/life balance and a healthy lifestyle had stopped and I had gained back a lot of weight. As I struggled with these things, I learned the value of the help and support of my peers, superiors, and colleagues, and of the resources in our Employee Assistance and Health and Wellness programs. I continued to learn the value of working with leadership and personal effectiveness coaches. My weight and my work/life balance goals were back on track by the end of the summer this year, and I continue to take positive steps in that direction.

Professionally, I learned that I respect and love that we work in an organization where the exchange of free and unfettered ideas is appreciated and encouraged, and when that exchange has a respectful, constructive and collegial intent.

I was reminded that the key to the success of an organization is for people to give and receive feedback, confront problems and issues openly and directly, and accept criticism as an opportunity for learning. There are many ways we can react to feedback; however, how we react is up to us. We can choose to be defensive, or we can choose to listen and learn, celebrate our successes, and support each other through the challenges of change that we all face.

A distinguishing feature of a high performing organization, I learned, is the amount of open dialogue that occurs; not just from the top down, but in all directions: up, down and sideways. Such feedback creates shared meaning and fosters the collaboration that helps everyone perform at a higher level. With this mindset, each of us will understand how what we do everyday contributes to our individual and organizational success.

So in summary, despite the challenges, the past 20 months have helped increase my resiliency, strengthened my commitment to the directions of the University, and solidified my resolve to continue to accept the challenge of leading change. I learned that I remain personally committed to the future and success of this great University. I continue to be excited and humbled by my own part in leading change and know that it will take all of us - and especially the “people leaders” of our organization - to continue to create a culture that fosters success.

You may also be struggling with unique challenges. This issue of the update introduces a series of new learning modules to assist line managers in skills specific to the human resources accountabilities of their jobs. Please check these offerings and plan to attend. And please remember to participate in the Employee Opinion Survey!

A Short Summary of the Human Resources Plan

The HR Plan identifies University-wide best practices in human resources to support the University’s Strategic Directions. The staff in HR support and facilitate these best-practices across the organization. The HR Plan focuses on five best-practice strategic initiatives. Very simply summarized they are: **Recruit, Align, Develop, Engage and Reward**. Together they support the creation of a culture that fosters success. Each of the above areas need improved practices across campus to support the University’s success. This edition of the HR Update focuses on **Engage** and **Develop**.



For further information, you can view the complete HR Plan on the Integrated Planning website.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN'S *Employee Opinion Survey*

It's that time again – to give the University your feedback!

You are invited to participate in the University's Employee Opinion Survey, which will be on-line and live in early November. All faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in the survey. The higher the participation, the more helpful the survey is in providing feedback to the University's planning committees, Colleges and Units in moving toward the goals set out in the *Second Integrated Plan*.

"Your input in the survey is very important," according to Provost Brett Fairbairn. "This is one of your opportunities to provide feedback and shape the University's future. The survey provides us with a better understanding of employee attitudes and perceptions about engagement and development; the nature of work environments; progress in creating and appreciating diversity, and alignment with core values."

The results of the survey will lead to action planning and the development of programs to meet the needs of all faculty and staff. Most importantly, the survey will provide data to support work place initiatives and resource allocation so that decisions are based on data rather than perceptions and anecdotal information.

One of the three areas of priority in the *Second Integrated Plan* is to "work together more effectively across unit and institutional boundaries."

The *Second Integrated Plan* sets out timelines (by 2012) and measures to help us know if we are on track. One

of these measures includes if our **"Employee Opinion Survey indicates that faculty and staff are more engaged in the life and vitality of the University and are actively involved in shaping their careers and developing their capacities."** (*Second Integrated Plan, Full Version, Page 25*)

The first U of S Employee Opinion Survey took place in 2005. It provided baseline information against which to measure future progress. The second survey in 2006 saw an increase in participation from all employee groups and reinforced the baseline data (full survey findings are available on the HR website at www.usask.ca/hrd/survey/index.php). The increased participation in the survey in 2006 allowed HR to provide colleges and units with data relating to work environments which assists them in developing action plans.

Based on the results of previous surveys, a number of changes have been made and action taken. Most notably is the inclusion of a number of people strategies in the *Second Integrated Plan*, including leadership and career development: *"In this planning cycle, we need to do a much better job of nurturing talent within, of mentoring faculty and staff to perform at their best, and of acknowledging the important contributions made."* (*Second Integrated Plan, Full Version, Page 23*)

The responses to the survey are confidential and no information is collected that can identify individual responders. The survey reports are compiled in such a way that small

units are also grouped to ensure confidentiality.

Survey results are compiled into a University-wide report which is shared publicly and discussed with Senior Administrators, the Provost's Committee on Integrated Planning (PCIP) and other planning groups. College and Unit reports are provided to the leaders of the units and HR Consultants are assigned to work with those leaders to ensure the information survey results are shared and action plans are developed. Training modules are also being offered to assist line managers in developing action plans. Please refer to page 5 of this Update for more details about the module.

"The survey has been modified slightly from previous years as a result of feedback," says Surinder Saini, Director, Human Resources. "The foundational questions remain to provide a means of measuring changes between subsequent surveys." A few questions have been clarified and some demographic data added to assist in data analysis.

The full results of the survey will be posted on the HR website and reported in a future HR Update. All faculty and staff will be notified of the launch of the 2008 Survey through an e-mail message.

"We look forward to your responses, so that together we can continue to improve our work and learning environments," Surinder added.

For more information contact HR at 966-6270.

HUMAN RESOURCES IS PLEASED TO INTRODUCE A *University-Specific Skill Development Series for Line Managers*

The University's *Second Integrated Plan* states that "the University of Saskatchewan will support programs aimed at encouraging leadership and career development among faculty, staff and students." The HR Plan also identifies development as a strategic priority.

There are many outstanding management and/or leadership courses available through the U of S community. Staff in HR are collaborating with units and groups in the campus and local community to ensure there are a wide range of programs to support our faculty and staff with their development needs.

There is, however, a need for HR to provide improved orientation and job-specific management training to promote skill development for line managers in their "human resource management role" (as identified in their accountabilities) at the U of S.

Bob Bayles, HR Director (Develop) says, "To address the unique challenges of line managers at the University of Saskatchewan, we are offering a 'Manager's Skill Development Series.'"

This program consists of 10 modules that, together, provide skill building in the key strategic areas of Recruit, Engage, Develop, Align and Reward.

As each of the modules are critical to effective people management and unique to the University of Saskatchewan, we strongly encourage managers to complete the entire series. The modules are designed to be no more than three hours in length and are targeted to those currently in supervisor, line-manager, department head, or related positions.

Please note that the details below may be subject to change. A nominal charge may apply for each module to cover the cost of materials and supplies. Please visit our website (www.usask.com/hrd) for the most up-to-date details and for registration information.

| Module | Module Title | Description | Options |
|--------|--|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | Achieving a Representative Workforce Through the Values of Diversity Presenters: Trevor Wilson & Candace Wasacase-Lafferty | You will explore ways to ensure a broad and culturally diverse candidate pool to support your recruitment goals. This workshop is directly linked to the imperative of enhancing the experience of Aboriginal, international, and other cultural diversity as described in the University's Integrated Plan. | Nov 6 / 08 9:00 to noon |
| | | | Nov 6 / 08 1:30 to 4:30 |
| | | | Date TBA: Spring 2009 |
| 2 | Competency Based Recruitment – Getting Started Presenter: June Vargo | You will learn how to use the competencies in the Performance Framework to determine selection criteria. You will also learn practical tools for screening applications and selecting a short list of qualified candidates to support your recruitment goals. | Feb 9 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| | | | Apr 7 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| 3 | Competency Based Recruitment – Behavioural Interviewing and Reference Checks Presenter: June Vargo | You will learn how to conduct competency-based behavioural interviews, how to conduct effective reference checks, and how to select the best candidates to support your recruitment goals. Prerequisite: Module 2 | Feb 10 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | Apr 17 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |

| Module | Module Title | Description | Options |
|--------|---|--|------------------------------|
| 4 | Defining Accountabilities Presenters: Donalda Cormier & Raelin Zaparaniuk | You will learn how to write your own, or help others write effective accountability statements. You will understand the connection of clear accountabilities to align your staff to achieve effective performance outcomes (within the University's Performance Framework). | Nov 17 / 08 1:30 to 3:30 |
| | | | Dec 11 / 08 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | Feb 25 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| 5 | Giving and Receiving Feedback Presenters: Donalda Cormier & Candace Wasacase-Lafferty | You will increase your effectiveness as a manager in developing your staff by learning how to give and receive feedback which leads to development and improved performance (within the University's Performance Framework). Prerequisite: Module 4 | Dec 11 / 08 1:30 to 3:30 |
| | | | Jan 21 / 08 1:30 to 3:30 |
| | | | Mar 24 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| 6 | Moving From Issues to Action Presenters: Laura Sommervill & Wade Epp | You will learn the best approach to addressing performance issues in our unionized environment. You will improve your understanding of the appropriate action depending on the circumstances, focusing first on development , before moving to corrective action. | Feb 3 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | Mar 18 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | May 14 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| 7 | Understanding the Grievance / Arbitration Process Presenters: Laura Sommervill & Wade Epp | You will learn about your role in the grievance process, from when a grievance is filed up to and through the arbitration process. You will also learn about the University's problem-solving approach to grievances to support a proactive and engaged environment. Prerequisite: Module 6 | Feb 5 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| | | | Mar 19 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | May 21 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| 8 | Creating Positive Work Environments through Health and Wellness Presenters: Bob Bayles & Judy Metcalfe | You will learn strategies to promote health and wellness in your workplace, how to proactively identify and address health issues to retain and engage employees, and learn about the resources available to assist you. | Jan 22 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | Apr 2 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | Apr 28 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| 9 | Creating Positive Work Environments through Respectful Workplaces Presenter: Carole Pond | You will learn how to retain your employees by continually fostering positive and respectful work and learning environments. You will learn how to identify and correct negative workplace norms. | Jan 19 / 08 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | Feb 4 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| | | | May 28 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| 10 | Creating Action Plans to Engage and Retain Employees Presenters: Barb Daigle & Bob Bayles | You will learn how to interpret the Employee Opinion Survey results for your unit and involve your employees in developing action plans to increase engagement and retention . | Mar 3 / 09 9:00 to 11:00 |
| | | | Mar 13 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |
| | | | Apr 21 / 09 1:30 to 3:30 |

CHANGES IN LEGISLATION IN SUPPORT OF *Positive Work Environments*

Carole Pond, Coordinator of the University's Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services (DHPS) office, which is part of the Health and Wellness Resource Centre, reports that recent legislative changes support the University's goals of positive and productive workplaces.

- The Occupational Health and Safety legislation was revised so that employers are required to provide employees with a workplace that is free of personal harassment (harassment that is not based upon a prohibited ground such as color or religion). The University's policy has included this provision for some time. The legislation has caught up to the University's high standards.
- A September 2008 Fact Sheet from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission announced that "Under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, Discrimination because of gender identity is against the law in Saskatchewan."

Carole is a valuable resource for workplace education, mediation, collaboration with managers, HR consultants and others in problem-solving approaches, investigations and promotion of diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace. Carole's office is also one of the sponsors of the University's *Positive Space Campaign*, a campus-wide initiative run by the Provost's Advisory Committee on Sexual and Gender Diversity, the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) Pride Centre, and DHPS. The Program reflects the University's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness and a campus community free of discrimination.

Carole will be presenting Module 9: Creating Positive Work Environments through Respectful Workplaces (please see page 5 for more information). She can be reached at her office in the Health and Wellness Resource Centre: Room 237, Research Annex, 105 Maintenance Road, or by phone at 966-4936. You can visit the DHPS website at <http://www.usask.ca/dhps>.

UPCOMING HR INFORMATION SESSIONS

In addition to the modules offered on pages 4 and 5, HR will provide information sessions on timely topics and/or in response to specific requests. Some examples of these are listed in the section below. For the most current offerings please check the HR website: <http://www.usask.ca/hrd/>.

- Completing Performance Reviews (About the Forms) (must take Module 5 as a prerequisite)
- Working with Collective Agreements
- Faculty Appointment Processes
- About-US Training
- Assessing your Workplace Climate
- Specific Health and Wellness Sessions

We are also reviewing and updating the HR website to improve our service. Please send suggestions or comments by email to hrdwebmaster@usask.ca.

More Frequent New Employee Orientation Sessions 2008/09

The orientation session for new faculty and staff has been completely redesigned for 2008/09. The sessions will take place at regular intervals to be more responsive to new employees. We encourage all new faculty and staff to attend.

To view upcoming dates and to register for the New Employee Orientation, please visit the following link: www.usask.ca/hrd/employees/getting_oriented.php.

MESSAGE FROM

President Peter MacKinnon

As I conclude my second term as President, I have reflected on the challenges of transformative change at the University of Saskatchewan. The strategic directions and integrated plans have been strongly endorsed, supported and approved by the governance and planning bodies. Together we have shaped our directions; opting to create a culture of success so that the University can, in Walter Murray's words, hold an honourable place among the best universities in Canada and the world.

Despite strong consensus for the directions of the University and the emergence of a culture of success and celebration, there have been challenges. The courage and resiliency of leaders who support the directions is critical to the University's success. That leadership has been demonstrated in the development and approval of our Second Integrated Plan and the action phase we are now moving into with the announcement of commitment leaders. As we move into the action stages, continuous feedback and improvement through discussions in workplaces across campus will be essential to the success and support of everyone involved.

I want to thank those of you across campus who recently participated with me at roundtable discussions about the work environment at the University, or joined me at a breakfast with the President session. The participants represented a good cross section of employees and units. My strong impression from these discussions was that our employees generally find the University a great place to work. The vast majority enjoy coming to work in the morning, are positively engaged, feel valued and supported. There is, of course, room for improvement and we will continue to focus on the creation of positive and productive work and learning environments.

To continue these discussions I want to remind you that all faculty and staff are invited to join me for informal discussions over breakfast each Friday morning at the Faculty Club. Please reserve space by calling 966-7777 at least two days in advance. There is no cost to attend. You will be my guests.

Another source of feedback, the Employee Opinion Survey, has been identified in our Second Integrated Plan as a valuable evaluation tool to assess the quality of work environments.

I strongly encourage faculty, staff and administrators to complete the third survey in early November 2008. The survey measures our progress in creating positive workplace environments and identifies areas for progress. We will use the results of the survey to develop action plans based on your feedback. With your participation, the quality of the survey results will be enhanced and we will be that much closer to realizing an even better place to work.

I am often asked about the role of the Associate Vice-President Human Resources (HR), and the role of the HR department in supporting the changing directions of the University. First, I report that we recently completed a performance review of Barb Daigle, our Associate Vice-President of HR. This was a comprehensive review, chaired by Vice-President Florizone, following the Board-approved processes for the review of Senior Administrators. AVP Daigle has a continuing appointment, so the results of the review are not communicated in the same manner as when a reappointment is announced. While the results of such reviews are, of course, confidential, I believe it is important for the community to know the review has been completed and that the Committee has reported that Barb Daigle is a highly valued member of our senior administration and is widely respected for the strategic leadership, vision and integrity she has demonstrated in aligning HR practices to support the strategic directions of the University. In promoting feedback, open dialogue and a culture of performance, she sometimes becomes a target for those who

do not support the directions of the University, or who would rather not have the changes come so quickly. I assure you that Barb and the HR department are operating within the complete support of senior administration, and we greatly appreciate her work.

Second, I am pleased to announce an external review of the HR function—the first of what will be ongoing reviews of Administrative Units at the University guided by the new Framework for Assessment. I am delighted to have the commitment of the following panel members, each an eminent human resource professional with vast experience in human resource management in a university setting, to conduct this review. They are Angela Hildyard, Vice-President of Human Resources at the University of Toronto; Lisa Castle, Associate Vice-President of Human Resources at the University of British Columbia; and Brian Mallory, a Human Resources consultant who previously held HR leadership positions at Royal Roads and Queen's Universities and who works closely with the HR Executive Council of the Conference Board of Canada. The review will be conducted between February 1 and June 30, 2009.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for your ongoing commitment to the processes which contribute to positive and productive work environments, which in turn support the success of our University.





COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATE

Fall 2008

Collective bargaining and bargaining preparation continues as the University works toward timely agreements with several of our unions.

Through collective bargaining, and the renewal of collective agreements, the University's goal is to support recruitment and retention of our employees by negotiating market competitive salaries and rewards for performance. This approach is balanced with overall fiscal responsibility and a commitment to the priorities of the *Second Integrated Plan*.

Administrative and Supervisory Personnel Association (ASPA)

Parties at Conciliation

The University and ASPA continue to meet with the assistance of a Conciliator. The next session is scheduled for November 4 & 5, 2008.

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE Local 1975)

Interest Arbitration Hearing Begins

An initial meeting on the interest arbitration hearing regarding the outstanding issues from CUPE 1975 bargaining took place in September. The process is proceeding with a further meeting scheduled on October 28, 2008.

University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association (USFA)

Preparing for Bargaining

The contract between the University and the Faculty Association expires on June 30, 2009. The University has finalized the composition of its bargaining team and is reviewing priorities for bargaining and any issues arising from changes to the last collective agreement. We are optimistic that negotiations with the Faculty Association will begin in the new year.

Please watch the Human Resources website for additional updates as they become available (<http://www.usask.ca/hrd/>).

To share your ideas and suggestions, please contact us at HR_update_feedback@usask.ca.

Coming in the Next Issue!

It's all about Engage and Develop:

Health and Wellness Programs

Employee Opinion
Survey Results

Crisis Prevention

Health, Safety & Environment
Management System

....and more