

Staff Action Team Recommendations

In Response to the myGVSU Climate Survey 2015

The Staff Action Team of the myGVSU Climate Survey 2015 recommends the following actions be taken to improve the campus climate for Executive Administrative Professionals (EAP), Professional Support Services (PSS), Department of Public Safety (DPS), and Maintenance/Grounds/Service (MGS) employees at Grand Valley State University. The recommendations are ordered by suggested academic year of implementation.

Immediate Action

Create Ombuds Position

Create a Faculty and Staff Ombuds position to serve as an advocate for faculty and staff to address concerns related to inequity. The full-time, paid position should be independent and outside of the Human Resources department. The Ombuds should offer confidentiality to individuals raising concerns. When addressing a concern which could be traced back to the complainant, the Ombuds should seek consent to further investigate the concern.

Rationale

Through the creation of a Faculty and Staff Ombuds, the university will have a permanent advocate to improve the campus climate for employees. Many of the following recommendations could be job responsibilities for the ombudsperson and alleviate the additional demands these recommendations would impose upon Inclusion and Equity and Human Resources.

The campus climate study reveals 31% of EAP staff members and 25% of hourly staff members are reluctant to bring up issues that concern them for fear that it will affect their performance evaluation or promotion decisions. The above concern is more prevalent in historically disadvantaged groups. People of color serving in EAP positions are 66% more likely than whites to report they are reluctant, and women are 36% more likely than men to report reluctance. Because of the overall high numbers and the disproportionately high reluctance reported by people of color and women, we feel the Ombuds will provide an avenue for employees to seek resolutions to the issues that concern them.

While one of our following recommendations encourages the university to create a robust reporting system and educating employees on their options for reporting, a Faculty and Staff

Ombuds could act as a clearinghouse for reports and as an advisor to employees on how to effectively resolve issues before and after the enhanced reporting system is created.

Plan for Implementation

During the spring/summer of 2017, Inclusion and Equity will create a comprehensive job description and conduct a search to hire an individual with experience confidentially advocating for employees. Empower the position by granting them appropriate powers to ensure they are able to successfully investigate and correct campus climate issues. The position should be able to advise employees in a confidential manner. In addition to the role as a confidential advisor, the Ombuds should be able to conduct investigations and require Human Resources and Inclusion and Equity to share the findings of their investigations. The Ombuds will be granted the power to conduct investigations independent of other departments when investigating concerns which may be creating a negative climate for employees. When informed of acts such as unfair and unjust hiring or promotion practices, inappropriate conduct by supervisors, or hostile work environments the Ombuds should and will attempt to resolve those issues.

The Ombuds will report to the Vice President of Inclusion and Equity, but will retain independence for normal operations. If the Ombuds' workload exceeds capacity, we encourage Inclusion and Equity to quickly respond by hiring additional support for the Ombuds.

Upon creation and staffing of the Ombuds position, Inclusion and Equity and the new Ombuds will send an e-mail to all employees explaining the position and the position's responsibilities. Periodically send e-mails to remind employees of the position and continue communication.

2017/2018 Actions

Create Strategic Plans for Each Department to Address Climate

Each department will create action plans to address areas of concern revealed in the disaggregated climate study data. Each action plan should address department work climate concerns from a staff perspective and/or student perspectives revealed in the climate study results.

Rationale

Departments across the university have various climates and needs. By providing campus climate data specific to individual departments to those departments, we enable them to create targeted adjustments which are more likely to be effective and have beneficial impact.

When disaggregating campus climate data by gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability, the data indicates that staff with historically marginalized identities are:

- Less comfortable with campus climate (85% of men vs. 79% of women), (84% white vs. 62% Staff of Color), (82% Heterosexual/Straight vs. 70% LGBQ+), (82% No Disability vs. 74% Disability)
- More likely to have personally experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, hostile, and/or harassing conduct/behavior that has interfered with their ability to work/learn at GVSU(42% Staff of Color vs. 24% White), (37% LGBQ+ vs. 26% Heterosexual/Straight), (49% Disability vs. 36% No Disability)
- More likely to have observed conduct that was believed to create an exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, hostile, and/or harassing work/learning environment (32% of Men vs. 43% of Women), (58% Staff of Color vs. 37% White), (56% LGBQ+ vs. 39% Heterosexual/Straight), (54% Disability vs. 38% No Disability)
- More likely to observe unfair and unjust employment practices at GVSU (31% of Men vs. 42% of Women), (55% Staff of Color vs. 36% White), (60% LGBQ+ vs. 37% Heterosexual/Straight), (61% Disability vs. 35% No Disability)
- Less likely to feel that they belong at GVSU (85% White vs. 70% Staff of Color), (83% Heterosexual/Straight vs. 70% LGBQ+), (84% No Disability vs. 71% Disability)
- Less likely to feel like they can be their authentic selves at GVSU (74% White vs. 51% Staff of Color), (72% Heterosexual/Straight vs. 52% LGBQ+), (74% vs. 59% Disability)
- Less likely to agree that GVSU is committed to diversity (83% White vs. 47% Staff of Color), (78% Heterosexual/Straight vs. 68% LGBQ+)
- Less likely to agree that equity is characteristic of GVSU (71% White vs. 40% Staff of Color), (68% Heterosexual/Straight vs. 52% LGBQ+), (68% No Disability vs. 55% Disability)
- Less likely to think the university understands the value of a diverse staff (79% White vs. 41% Staff of Color), (75 Heterosexual/Straight vs. 52% LGBQ+)
- Report lower levels of satisfaction with their job (71% Staff of Color vs. 85% White), (74% LGBQ+ vs. 83% Heterosexual), (73% Disability vs. 84% No Disability)
- Report lower levels of satisfaction with their compensation compared to other GVSU colleagues with a similar level of experience (49% Staff of Color vs. 60% White)

Plan for Implementation

Inclusion and Equity, Human Resources, and Institutional Marketing will collaborate and document a framework to assist department heads and guide them in the necessary key components. The document should serve as a primer to ensure department heads are able to effectively interpret the trends revealed in the data.

Once the above document is complete, Inclusion and Equity will provide each department with climate study results specific to their department or unit, based on the most appropriate level

of disaggregating the data. Inclusion and Equity will consult with department heads to assist in identifying areas of concern and possible methods to respond to those areas of concern. Department heads will create an action plan designed to address areas of concern.

The action plans will need to have accountability measures in place and department heads should submit an annual report to Inclusion and Equity to explain actions taken, lessons learned, and future plans. When available, department heads should use data to supplement their reports.

Audit Annual Salary Adjustments

Audit the annual salary adjustments and promotions of EAP staff, paying particular attention to identifying disparities which may exist related to gender and/or race and ethnicity.

Rationale

- 37% of EAP staff reported they disagreed or strongly disagreed that salary determinations are fair. Another 23% reported they were neutral on the same question. People of color in EAP positions were 55% more likely to disagree than whites. Women in EAP positions were 28% more likely to disagree than men.
- In a similar question, 41% of EAP staff reported they disagreed or strongly disagreed that salary determinations are clear. Another 22% reported they were neutral for a total of 62% not agreeing the salary determinations are clear. People of color in EAP positions were 19% more likely to disagree than whites. Women in EAP positions were 25% more likely to disagree than men.
- When asked if they were reluctant to bring up issues that concern them for fear that it will affect their performance evaluation or tenure/promotion decisions, 31% of EAP reported they either agree or strongly agree. People of color were 66% more likely than whites, and women were 37% more likely than men to agree they were reluctant to bring up issues that concern them.

Plan for Implementation

Inclusion and Equity will request data from Human Resources which includes all annual salary adjustments and promotions for EAPs over the last five years with a unique employee identifier, gender, race and ethnicity, and unique employee identifier of the evaluating supervisor. Inclusion and Equity will analyze the data to investigate the annual salary adjustments to determine if any groups are receiving statistically significant different annual salary increases.

Inclusion and Equity will additionally analyze the data to determine if the variance in average ranking among supervisors could be a source of inequity in salary adjustments. We understand

some supervisors will go out of their way to ensure their employees receive the maximum salary adjustments possible while other supervisors will utilize the ePDP to provide constructive criticism and may never give the highest rating to leave something for the employee to strive towards. The variances in how the ePDP system is interpreted and used among supervisors could be creating inequities unrelated to job performance. By analyzing the data and comparing supervisors' average ratings, we may be able to determine if supervisors need additional training or if a mitigation strategy should be put in place.

Implement Consistent Family Leave Policy

Create and implement a family leave policy for all faculty and staff inclusive of childbearing, non-childbearing, and adoption situations. Avoid using terminology equating pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing to a disability.

Rationale

The survey instrument did not inquire into relevant areas to provide adequate quantitative feedback on this recommendation. Significant differences present in our various policies and procedures across employee groups related to family leave create inequities and employee dissatisfaction. Survey respondents expressed strong concerns regarding lack of support from supervisors regarding time off for family related reasons, insufficient institutional policies supporting parental leave, as well as challenges experienced due to inadequate paid leave time.

Plan for Implementation

Inclusion and Equity, Human Resource's Work Life Consultant, The Women's Commission, Faculty Senate, AP Committee, and representatives from the hourly employee groups will create a task force to develop and propose a new policy to present to the GVSU Board of Trustees.

Clarify and Document Hiring and Promotion

Clarify and document the hiring and promotion process for EAP staff. Explicitly document, make available, and enforce policies related to internal promotions made without the use of a competitive process.

Rationale

- 59% of women of color and 54% of men of color in EAP positions have observed unfair and unjust employment practices at GVSU. They are respectively 61% and 177% more likely to have observed unfair and unjust employment practices when compared to their white counterparts. 43% of people of color in EAP positions observed unfair and unjust employment practices specifically related to promotion, tenure, reappointment, and/or reclassification.

- 40% of women in EAP positions have observed unfair or unjust employment practices. Women in EAP positions are 53% more likely to have observed those practices than men. 23% of women in EAP positions observed unfair and unjust employment practices specifically related to promotion, tenure, reappointment, and/or reclassification.
- Through anecdotal evidence, we recognize the inconsistencies in how positions are filled can create an environment where employees feel favoritism is a significant determinant in who is selected for promotion when a competitive process is not used. Our Inclusion Advocate Program exists to ensure the use of fair and equitable practices in hiring, but when a committee is not formed to conduct a search the university does not benefit from the program.

Plan for Implementation

Human Resources in collaboration with representatives from the AP Committee will document current practice and create policies for the university to follow when filling EAP positions. The policies should enumerate the conditions positions may be filled through internal promotions and when vacant or new positions must be filled through a competitive search. If the practice of internal promotions without a competitive search is used in the interest of expediency, we recommend developing policies which permit an internal-only competitive search.

Human Resources will be responsible for making the policies readily available to employees and enforcing the proper execution of the policies.

2018/2019 Actions

Review EAP Salary Adjustment Program

Review the EAP Salary Adjustment Program to develop recommendations to improve the program's effectiveness, fairness, and clarity. Ensure the program is adequately explained and documentation is readily available to staff to keep the program as transparent as possible.

Rationale

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- 40% of women in EAP positions have observed unfair or unjust employment practices. Women in EAP positions are 53% more likely to have observed those practices than

men. 23% of women in EAP positions observed unfair and unjust employment practices specifically related to promotion, tenure, reappointment, and/or reclassification.

- 37% of EAP staff reported they disagreed or strongly disagreed that salary determinations are fair. Another 23% reported they were neutral on the same question. People of color in EAP positions were 55% more likely to disagree than whites. Women in EAP positions were 28% more likely to disagree than men.
- In a similar question, 41% of EAP staff reported they disagreed or strongly disagreed that salary determinations are clear. Another 22% reported they were neutral for a total of 62% not agreeing the salary determinations are clear. People of color in EAP positions were 19% more likely to disagree than whites. Women in EAP positions were 25% more likely to disagree than men.

Plan for Implementation

Convene a task force to analyze the EAP salary adjustment program and generate recommendations for improvement. Include a diverse selection of EAP representatives from across the university and representatives from Human Resources and Business and Finance. The university compensation program's objective is "to attract, retain, motivate and reward faculty and staff fairly, equitably and competitively." The task force should address the factors of implicit biases, variances between supervisors' approaches to ratings in the ePDP system, and other factors which may contribute to unfairness and inequity. Creating a clearer and fairer system is recommended.

To improve clarity, the task force should delineate and clarify the "performance, promotion, market and salary compression" factors that comprise the adjustments made annually for EAP staff. Additional emphasis should be put on documentation of job responsibilities and expectations to provide a strong basis to measure performance.

Ensure all staff are able to access a plan explaining how salary and salary adjustments are determined. If different departments operate under varying policies or practices, ensure each department makes available to staff documentation detailing their specific implementation.

Create and make readily available an appeal process for staff to address potential inequities. The appeals process will provide employees who believe they have experienced inconsistent or unfair evaluations an avenue to seek an equitable resolution.

Conduct Mandatory Supervisor Diversity Training

While continuing to provide diversity education for staff at every level, institute a mandatory curriculum for all individuals in a supervisory role with the expectation the information is disseminated within departments. Issues that emerge from the data suggest this curriculum

should also include maternal/nursing rights, family work life balance, and implicit bias training. Utilize any informative results of the salary study which analyzed inequities in annual salary adjustments to aid supervisors in recognizing implicit biases.

Rationale

- One of the action items following the 2015 Emergency Town-hall meeting convened by the Student Diversity Coalition was to develop a process to review faculty and staff hiring and promotion processes for potential enhancements.
- Additional information requested in regards to promotions reveals that although there has been a steady increase in minority staff promotions from 2012 to 2016, the number remains relatively low, an average of 21% over the last five years.
- EAP and PSS staff have both witnessed and experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, hostile, and/or harassing conduct attributed to their position.
- Staff that hold historically marginalized identities, particularly staff of color and LGBTQ+ staff are less satisfied with their job/career progression, compensation, and access to professional development.
- 82.4% of mothers of children under 18 or soon to be mothers employed as staff agreed or strongly agreed GVSU should provide more diversity training for supervisors, managers, and department heads.

Plan for Implementation

Human Resources will create a new mandatory training program for supervisors and a system to track completion of requirements by supervisors. The training program will include the following aspects or equivalents:

- A two-day Institute for Healing Racism
- Queer and Trans 101: A Training for Allies
- Bias incident training
- ePDP training
- Implicit gender biases
- Accepting feedback from supervisees regarding inappropriate work environments in a non-intimidating manner.
- A seminar explaining employee benefits and rights covering at least the following topics:
 - Family Medical Leave Act
 - Salary continuation
 - Union contracts
 - Flexible work arrangements
 - Compensation

- Exercise release time
- Rights of nursing mothers

Human Resources will notify all existing supervisors of the required training. If supervisors have previously completed components of the training, they shall be given credit. Existing supervisors will have a deadline to complete the training program set to six to eight months after implementation.

New supervisors must complete the program within six months of being hired or promoted into a supervisory position. Human Resources will notify new supervisors of the training program requirement and track the completion of the training program.

2019/2020 Actions

Train Employees to Address Inappropriate Work Environments and Improve Complaint Response Process

Create a program with the goal of training all faculty and staff to identify unhealthy or abusive work environments and educating them on how to report the inappropriate aspects of their work environment. When employees submit complaints, the university should aggressively follow up with an investigation.

Human Resources and/or Inclusion and Equity should work with leaders who have been found to be responsible for inappropriate actions or knowingly allowed such actions. The consultation should focus around creating a corrective action plan to restore the work environment to a healthy state. Human Resources and/or Inclusion and Equity should follow up to ensure the corrective action plan is implemented. Before closing the action plan, Human Resources and/or Inclusion and Equity should ensure the desired changes to climate have been observed by employees.

Rationale

- Approximately 28% of staff do not feel comfortable in addressing concerns within their department for fear of retaliation relating to promotion (Appendix C, Table 39: Question 15)
- 59% of women of color and 54% of men of color in EAP positions have observed unfair and unjust employment practices at GVSU. They are respectively 61% and 177% more likely to have observed unfair and unjust employment practices when compared to their white counterparts. 43% of people of color in EAP positions observed unfair and unjust employment practices specifically related to promotion, tenure, reappointment, and/or reclassification.

- 40% of women in EAP positions have observed unfair or unjust employment practices. Women in EAP positions are 53% more likely to have observed those practices than men. 23% of women in EAP positions observed unfair and unjust employment practices specifically related to promotion, tenure, reappointment, and/or reclassification.
- 59.6% of faculty, staff, and students agreed or strongly agreed GVSU should provide more diversity training for supervisors, managers, and department heads. (Appendix C, Table 33)
- 82.4% of mothers of children under 18 or soon to be mothers employed as staff agreed or strongly agreed GVSU should provide more diversity training for supervisors, managers, and department heads.

Plan for Implementation

Human Resources will collaborate with Inclusion and Equity and the Faculty and Staff Ombuds to create and distribute documentation for staff to explain various methods of resolving inappropriate work environments. That documentation should contain who to contact to seek assistance in correcting problems when the inappropriate work environment warrants escalation. Staff complaints of inappropriate work environments should be promptly investigated.

Human Resources and Inclusion and Equity should make sure that supervisors are held accountable when supervisors have been found to be the cause or knowingly permit the cause of the inappropriate work environments. When inappropriate work environments are found, Human Resources will individually meet with members of the department to see what could be done to create a better work environment.

Create Leadership Professional Development Program

Institutionalize a leadership professional development and mentoring program that addresses opportunities for growth and promotion among staff who identify with marginalized identities including racial and ethnic minorities, transgender or “other” gender identity, women and LGBQA. This program is open to all staff members, with an emphasis on creating inclusive practice, intercultural competence, and opportunities for growth and advancement among underrepresented staff identities.

In addition to this program, pair mentees who participate in the program with mentors who are senior level administrators, providing them with an opportunity to job shadow and gain the knowledge and skills needed to advance into senior level administrative positions.

Rationale

Satisfaction with job/career progression at GVSU vary when data was disaggregated by identity when looking at satisfaction levels:

- 62% Heterosexual vs. 58% LGBTQ+ staff indicated they are satisfied or strongly satisfied
- 63% White vs. 51% Staff of Color indicated they are satisfied or strongly satisfied
- 64% No Disability vs. 51% Staff with a psychological or physical disability

Plan for Implementation

Human Resources in collaboration with Inclusion and Equity will create a leadership mentoring program that enables staff to enroll in professional development opportunities throughout the year and to engage with mentors on a one-on-one basis. Select qualified mentors by identifying staff in leadership positions who have completed prerequisite training that equips them to provide mentorship. The prerequisite training should include elements which help mentors understand power, privilege, and microaggressions. The program can be modeled after the Peter C. Cook Leadership Academy.

2020/2021 Actions

Enhance Exit Interviews to Include Climate Questions

Develop a set of questions to ask at exit interviews which may provide insight into campus climate areas which need addressing to increase retention. The exit interviews should be highly encouraged, with supervising department participation tracked to notice trends in participation rate to evaluate if supervisors/departments are encouraging participation. During the exit interviews, emphasize the confidential nature of the meetings and encourage departing employees to be honest about factors which may contribute to their departure. Share all findings related to campus climate with the Division of Inclusion and Equity.

Rationale

21% of staff reported they seriously considered leaving GVSU in the past year because of institutional climate (Campus Climate Survey Preliminary Results, page 23).

Based on responses from all groups including students and faculty, we find respondents in the following groups reporting higher than average (10%) rates of seriously considering leaving GVSU in the past year because of institutional climate (Campus Climate Survey Preliminary Results, page 27):

- Transgender/Other (25%)
- People of Color (18%)

- LGBTQA (17%)
- People with Disabilities (15%)
- Religious Minorities (12%)

“Large percentage of those uncomfortable with the campus climate at GVSU were ethnic minorities. Although a large majority of respondents reported being “comfortable” or “very comfortable” (n=10,034) with the overall climate at GVSU, it should be noted that of those who reported being “uncomfortable” or “very uncomfortable” (n= 490) approximately 36% of those respondents were People of Color. Of those 36% respondents, 13% reported being African American/African/Black. (myGVSU Climate Survey 2015 Expanded Findings, p. x).

Plan for Implementation

Human Resources and Inclusion and Equity will collaborate to create a revamped exit interview tool that incorporates climate related questions. Human resources will share the responses to climate related questions with Inclusion and Equity and the Faculty and Staff Ombuds. All three departments will use the responses to inform their operations.