Notes from Professional Development Memo Discussion with Dr. Shorty on 3-12-26

Overview of PD Memo

The committee discussed a memo outlining recommendations for Administrative Professional development. Dr. Shorty affirmed the value of the ideas presented but shifted the focus from a purely "equity" lens to one of organizational maturity and scalability.

While the committee raised concerns regarding inconsistent access, Dr. Shorty noted that these discrepancies are primarily a function of the university's current decentralized operational structure rather than a lack of intent. The discussion centered on how to move toward a more structured and centralized model for professional development.

Structural Maturity and Budget Limitations

The primary barrier to implementing the memo's recommendations is the current budgetary architecture, which lacks the centralization required for a scalable development program.

- Decentralized Allocation: Non-compensation funds are currently managed at the divisional level. This autonomy means development practices vary by unit maturity and local priority.
- Scalability Constraints: Without a centralized funding mechanism, the university cannot uniformly deploy the high-level recommendations proposed by the committee.
- Institutional Alignment: Transitioning to a centralized model would require a significant shift in the university's fiscal framework. Dr. Shorty noted that such structural evolution is a long-term maturity goal and not an immediate adjustment.

Addressing Operational Inconsistencies

The committee expressed that staff often perceive a lack of "equity" in access. Dr. Shorty reframed this as an issue of institutional standardization:

- Standardization Gap: Currently, access to time and funding is determined by divisional leadership, leading to a fragmented employee experience.

- Resource Centralization: Faculty models often possess more inherent structure for development; bringing staff opportunities to a similar level of centralized support is a key component of the People, Equity, and Culture (PEC) long-term roadmap.
- Retention & Talent Pipeline: To avoid talent loss, the university must move toward a more centralized and predictable framework for professional growth.

Current Foundation Building

While structural shifts are pending, efforts are focused on building the foundational maturity necessary to eventually support a scalable model:

- University-Wide Resources: Expanding platforms like Udemy and the "Leading Lakers" program to provide a consistent baseline of development across all divisions.
- Supervisory Frameworks: Developing leadership programming to ensure supervisors understand their role in a structured development ecosystem.
- Strategic Foundation: These initiatives are intended to prove the efficacy of a centralized approach, providing the data needed for future discussions on broader funding shifts.

Recommendation to Pause and Align

Dr. Shorty suggested a strategic pause on additional investigative work regarding the memo's specific recommendations.

- Resource Stewardship: Conducting extensive research now—before the structural barriers are addressed—would result in "wheel-spinning" and inefficient use of committee time.
- Operational Sequencing: The goal is to align committee efforts with the university's capacity to actually implement and scale those efforts.

Institutional Capacity and PEC Strategy

The conversation concluded with a focus on priority management and operational capacity:

- Strategic Maturity: Professional development is a priority in the PEC plan, but the university is currently in the "build" phase of its foundational structure.
- Capacity Assessment: Dr. Shorty emphasized that adding new initiatives requires a disciplined look at what current work should be reduced or retired to maintain focus.

- Next Steps: The PEC leadership team will meet in late March to assess the past year's progress, evaluate current capacity, and determine which structural priorities will move forward in the next phase of the university's growth.