
TO: Dr. Robert Shorty, H. Julian Woods, Natalie Trent

FROM: AP Professional Development Subcommittee

SUBJECT: Request for Collaboration to Assess Professional Development Equity for AP Staff

DATE: February 19, 2026

CC: AP Professional Development Subcommittee Members: Steph Balaskas, Hunter Bridwell, Liz Chase, Paul Cullen (Chair), Meredith Fedewa, Jeremy Paul (Vice Chair), Evan Potter, Benjamin Rhodes (Secretary), Johanna Swanson, Natalie Trent (HR Liaison), AP Executive Committee Chairs: Justin Melick (Chair), Jen Torreano (Vice Chair)

Purpose

The AP Professional Development Committee is examining the availability and equity of professional development (PD) opportunities available to Administrative Professional (AP) staff across GVSU. This effort is a response to recurring feedback from the AP Survey over the past years indicating that access, expectations, and funding vary widely among departments. We believe addressing these issues will improve AP staff engagement and retention.

We request collaboration with the People, Equity, and Culture office (PEC) to support data collection from supervisors, directors, and managers across the university who manage AP staff.

Background

Committee Charge

The AP Executive Committee has charged our group with exploring how PD funds are allocated to AP staff across the university.

Initial committee discussions (September–October 2025) identified the need to:

- Map how PD is defined, funded, and supported in each department and/or college;
- Gather information directly from supervisors regarding their expectations, philosophy, and practices related to PD for their teams; and
- Compare data with existing AP Survey responses to identify gaps and inconsistencies.

Benchmarking and External Research

AP PD Committee members conducted brief benchmarking scans of PD practices at other

Michigan public universities and selected national peer institutions (listed on the GVSU Factbook hosted by Institutional Analysis). Findings include:

- There is no standard model for centralized PD funding; many institutions rely on department-level options or application-based funding.
- Budget limitations have led institutions to freeze or reduce external PD funding.
- Internal PD options are expanding, including learning libraries, leadership development programs, supervisor training, microcredentials, and workshops.
- Common strategies to extend PD impact include utilizing internal subject matter experts, inter-institution collaboration, and cost-sharing for specialized programs.
- Policies, where they exist, often include required training, recommended annual PD hours, or competitive funding processes—not equal allocation by employee.

This benchmarking affirms that GVSU would benefit from understanding its own internal landscape before establishing standards, expectations, and recommendations.

Request for Support

To accurately assess PD offerings across GVSU, we seek assistance in:

1. **Distributing a supervisor/director/manager survey** to collect information on:
 - How departments/colleges define and support PD;
 - Availability and distribution of PD funds;
 - Expectations for employee participation in PD; and
 - Challenges supervisors/directors/managers face in providing, supporting, or identifying PD opportunities.
2. **Encouraging strong participation** from the Vice President level down and across divisions and departments to ensure accurate representation across the university.
3. **Reviewing findings & AP Committee recommendations** in partnership with People, Equity and Culture division, specifically Dr. Robert Shorty (Vice President of People, Equity, & Culture), H. Julian Woods (Executive Director of Human Resources), and

Natalie Trent (Director of Talent Management), once collected so we may collaboratively identify ways to improve PD access and allocation.

Next Steps

If supported, the AP PD committee will:

- Draft the proposed supervisor/director/manager survey, vet through AP Executive Committee and submit to PEC review;
- Work with PEC to administer survey through supervisors/directors/managers;
- Compile and analyze the results alongside existing AP Survey data; and
- Present a summary of findings and preliminary recommendations to the full AP Committee and Dr. Robert Shorty (Vice President of People, Equity, & Culture), H. Julian Woods (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Natalie Trent (Director of Talent Management) for further discussion and collaboration.

Please let us know how you would like to proceed and whether you would be willing to discuss next steps at an upcoming meeting.