

Employee Development Group
(Priority Strategic Initiative Coordinating Committee 16/18)

Quarterly Report, May 2002

Committee Goals

Create a staff development and in-house training program for library faculty and staff;
support scholarly efforts of library faculty

Members

Deb Kulczak (Chair), Andrea Cantrell, Elaine Contant, Karen Myers, Janell Prater,
Sherryl Robinson, Kareen Turner, Michael Dabrishus (liaison)

Overall Objectives:

- Determine training priorities based upon the feedback given by the support staff and faculty development groups
- Work with university personnel to provide needed training programs within the library
- Develop an orientation program for existing and new staff and faculty
- Determine criteria for faculty and professional staff to pursue scholarly efforts within the bounds of existing budgets
- Identify methods to support staff initiatives

Karen Myers has graciously offered to take minutes for the group. In an effort to improve communication and coordination of tasks with other library units, these minutes will also be distributed to the administration.

The primary tasks accomplished since the last report include:

New Employee “Welcome Packets”

The final revision (with suggestions) was approved by the Dean. The committee is currently working with the Human Resources office to implement this program.

New Employee Orientation

A sub-committee (Contant, Kulczak, Myers, and Prater) is working to develop a list of components that should constitute the new employee orientation process for classified, non-classified, and faculty employees.

As reported last quarter, the group developed a prototype Web orientation manual. The URL is:

<http://www.uark.edu/libinfo/NewEmp/NewEmp.html>

We are waiting for feedback from the administrative group before proceeding further.

Staff Training Program

Another sub-committee (Cantrell, Robinson, and Turner) continues to work on the proposed supervisor training program. One issue that surfaced was the lack of a weekend Inclement Weather Policy. Also discussed were developing a library “master calendar” of important deadlines, events, etc. and finding a “good employment development film.”

The group continues to work with the OPAC User Training Committee (OTC) on the issue of InfoLinks training. On April 15, the group previewed part two of “InfoLinks: An Introduction,” a PowerPoint program currently under development by OTC.

The group also discussed the Computer Skills Assessment Results from PSICC 19. One need identified by our own group is an elementary Windows course for employees who need it. The latter may include long-term employees who have used programs like OCLC and InfoLinks for years but never learned program basics when the library migrated to a Windows environment. (The group recognizes that Windows sessions have been offered by automation staff, but these have tended to focus on the features of new Windows releases, and what some employees have missed is the simple Windows functionality that most of us take for granted. An example encountered by one member is employees not knowing to click on the “+” or “-“ symbols to display/hide folder contents.) One suggested method is a Web CT course that employees could complete at their own pace. The group will coordinate this effort with PSICC 19.

Employee Suggestion Form

The group received approval to test an online Employee Suggestion Form (<http://libinfo.uark.edu/mailforms/employeesuggestions.asp>). The announcement was made May 7, and the form can be used by all employees to send suggestions for library improvement, new ideas, and/or constructive criticism. Suggestions will initially go to the Assistant Director for Organizational Development, Janet Parsch, who will forward them to the appropriate department(s), as needed. The form also allows employees to request that a suggestion be disseminated for wider discussion, and to this end we have worked with the Human Resources to establish a library electronic discussion list. The name of the list is LIBTALK-UAF-L, and information about it will soon be distributed to all library employees.

Group Priorities for Next Year

The group has been asked by the administration to provide a ranked list of priorities for 2002-2003. After discussion, the group recommends the following:

- 1) Complete work on the new employee orientation process, including the online orientation manual. Both are currently under development.
- 2) Implement a training program for new supervisors. This program is also in the development stage. When put in place, it would be required for all employees who are newly assigned the responsibility for supervising classified, non-classified, and/or faculty employees. For consistency, we will most likely recommend that existing supervisors also complete the training, with the added benefit that they should also be able to provide helpful feedback.
- 3) Develop the outline for a proposed set of continuing education/development “courses” and a schedule for implementation. Included would be recommendations about which programs should be required for all employees and which would be optional, how many programs should be required per year, and other such considerations.
- 4) Work with the administration to revive the Staff Concerns Council (perhaps under a different name). The group feels this body could serve as a vital communication link between support staff, their representatives, and the administration. Communication could be further improved if SCC minutes were posted on the Web. Also, the library should seek to have a representative on the university Staff Senate—preferably a member of SCC.
- 5) Establish a sub-group to deal with faculty development and scholarship issues. The Employee Development Group is currently addressing issues that affect all employees regardless of classification, and we believe this charge is too big to also effectively address specific faculty issues. On the other hand, the latter will be increasingly important in the current climate of higher expectations and “retooling.” In order to coordinate activities, the chair of this sub-group should be a member of the Employee Development Group.

Other Priorities

The group would like to mention two other concerns that could aid in the strategic planning process for next year but that do not fall under the group’s charge. First, we believe that an updated and widely-disseminated evacuation plan for the Libraries is critical. The issue of emergency procedures was mentioned repeatedly in the staff training survey, and it also figured prominently in several group discussions. Secondly, we would like to express encouragement that the work on departmental and branch Web

pages continue, as we think this information will be an important component of the Web orientation manual currently under development.

In-House Newsletter

The group was also asked to make recommendations about the currently-defunct newsletter *Mullings*. After discussion, the group was very much in favor of reviving this publication. However, in order for it to be a viable means of communication, the group feels that the administration must actively support it and encourage contributions from division/department heads as well as other employees. The group also feels strongly that there is room for both serious and humorous content, and that balance should be the goal. The group proposes publishing in PDF format, which would allow for the use of graphics and printing; distribution ideally would be through the StaffWeb. Finally, while the group felt a volunteer editorial/production staff was desirable (both faculty and staff), the overall responsibility for the publication needs to be assigned to one office in the library, such as Human Resources or the Dean's Office.

Staff Survey Follow-Up

The administration asked additionally that we clarify a few points from the staff survey conducted last fall. These are:

- Communication issue. The perception of group members is that while communication has improved in certain areas, it has not really improved in the library overall. Possible reasons: 1) fewer Cabinet meetings; 2) Cabinet minutes could be distributed in more timely fashion, and perhaps to a wider audience; 3) inconsistent communication, both between admin group member and department heads and between department heads and employees in their respective areas. (That is, some are communicating the information, and others are not.); 4) lack of information about library policies—getting these up on the Web is important. The bottom line is that changes in policy or procedure are not always communicated to everyone who needs to know. The group also feels that improving communication should be a component of all the PSICCs—that is, how efforts in their respective areas could be used for this end.
- Résumé building question. Our intent in asking this question was to solicit feedback about acquiring new skills and expertise. These would be of benefit to both the library and to individual employees should they seek employment elsewhere. Such a process is also helpful for building self-esteem, and by extension, morale. This does not mean teaching employees how to write a résumé.

- Fringe benefits. A concern is that not all employees feel they have an equal opportunity to take classes—the *perception* at least is that some departments encourage or allow it, while others discourage it. Another concern is that not all employees may feel equally welcome to attend library-wide events such as the Christmas Party or other celebrations. The group recognizes that most “concrete” benefits are system-controlled, but we can work on intangible sorts of benefits that build morale.
- Incentive program. While monetary support outside the cost of living/merit raises is not possible, there are other sorts of awards and incentives. The group will review the program at the University of Florida as a possible model.
- The comment under question one about “phone use info”—what does this mean? The group can only assume that this means basic policies about answering the phone, personal phone use, etc. The group agrees that such policies should be part of the orientation manual currently under development.
- Mentoring. Because the administrative group generally liked this idea, the group will note it as a topic that needs further exploration. (It should first be determined how this fits in with other group priorities.)

Student Training Committee

In February, the administrative group asked the group to consider the impact of having the Student Training Committee become a subcommittee responsible for student training since there is already overlap in membership between the two committees. After discussion, the group thought this was a good idea. Karen Turner was appointed as the new chair of the student staff training subcommittee. Her report is appended.

Pictorial Directory Proposal

A proposal for a staff web employee pictorial directory was submitted to the admin group for consideration. It was not approved.

Committee Name

The PSICC received approval for the working title of “Employee Development Group.” This designation will be used in all the materials we develop (such as the Welcome Packets) and in communications from the committee.

Staff Student Training Committee

End of the year report 2001-2002:

We have successfully finished another year. Sheri Gallaher started the year as the chair. Kareen Turner took over in late January. The programs were already set, with good results and good representation from all the departments in the University Libraries, including most of the branch libraries. The attendance for the Spring session was 36 students, which is approximately 75-80% of all new student employees for the Spring semester. We have 11 graduating student staff this Spring and made plans to award them with an Alumni T-Shirt, which was started last year. I see no indication that any changes need to be done, so I have not contacted the PSICC 16/18.