Frequently Asked Questions About Voices of the Staff

What is VOICES?

Voices of the Staff, also called VOICES, is a volunteer-based program that was launched in February 2005 to give staff at all University campuses and the Health System a forum for sharing ideas and defining the campus community issues that matter most to them. About 120 staff members from all areas of the University community serve as volunteers on Network Teams focused on six key topics. A subset of that group, the VOICES Core Team, has a direct dialog with the University's Executive Officers and shares ideas regularly with the University's President and Associate Vice President for Human Resources.

VOICES offers staff an opportunity to:

- Establish connections that open new channels of communication
- Provide creative suggestions on staff climate and satisfaction issues
- Inspire staff to recognize their own and each other's value and talents

What is the role of the Network Teams?

The Voices of the Staff Network Teams work toward increased understanding, connection, and participation in the life of the University in research, teaching, service, and patient care, and provide opportunities to understand the external and internal challenges facing the University. The teams provide staff input on specific issues, advise Core Team members on selected issues, raise issues expressed in the University community, and increase understanding of and participation in stewardship of the University.

What are the Network Team topics?

Network Team	Area of Focus
Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Developing strategies for addressing issues of concern; working to support an environment of transparency and open communication
Enhancing the Employee Experience	Learning best practices and providing recommendations to support positive work culture and balance professional and personal life
Embracing Change and Leading at all Levels	Partnering with faculty to share expertise on growing through adversity and investigating strategies for learning how to build resiliency and lead during times of change
Fostering Learning, Coaching, and Mentoring	Providing feedback for improving learning, exploring coaching and mentoring options, and suggesting tools to help facilitate career advancement
Leveraging Technology	Using technology to build personal competency, enhance the work experience and offer innovative solutions
Striving for Well-Being	Partnering with MHealthy and providing feedback for new ways to engage in the eight dimensions of wellness

What is the role of the Core Team?

The VOICES Core Team serves in an advisory capacity to the President, Executive Officers and the Associate Vice President for Human Resources on organizational climate and satisfaction issues, provides suggestions/actions on programmatic interests and development, and acts as sounding board on potential initiatives. Core Team members are expected to represent issues from their Network Team to the Core Team. They present information/actions on existing issues from their respective groups to administration through the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, who shepherds the advice through appropriate University decision-making processes, shares feedback from Executives, provides names of staff to serve on University committees, presents issues to executives that need further attention, and provides guidance on issues.

How are the members of the Voices of the Staff Network selected?

In an effort to create a microcosm of the U-M staff community*, the VOICES Program Management Team* identifies targeted numbers from each unit using a percentage of total staff ratio and broadly represented career communities. Volunteers are recruited through individual nominations from staff members and nominations from the Human Resource Communications Group (HR officers in the schools/colleges/units). Volunteers must have supervisor approval to participate and at least one year of U-M service in good standing. Training is provided to Network Team members so that they may participate fully and effectively in the process.

What competencies are needed to be a Network Team member?

Desired competencies include experience building relationships, strong interpersonal skills, leadership, achievement orientation, quality service delivery, creative problem solving, strategic thinking, commitment to the mission, development of self and others, and demonstrated communication skills.

How long a period of service is required?

Volunteers are expected to commit to a two-year term of service.

Is reappointment for a second term possible?

Yes. Reappointment for one additional term is allowed.

What is the time commitment expected of volunteers?

Each of the six Network Teams meets monthly for 1.5 hours. The Core Team meets quarterly for 2 hours and members are expected to be available as needed by the President, Executive Officers, and Associate Vice President for Human Resources. Participation in periodic training sessions is expected of all team members. All members are additionally expected to attend the day-long VOICES Annual Meeting, held in June.

How frequently does executive leadership meet with VOICES?

The President and/or other Executive Officers of the University will meet with the VOICES Core Team twice per year, or as needed. The Associate Vice President for Human Resources meets with the Network groups at least once per year and with the Core Team twice per year.

How can staff members express their opinions to VOICES?

Staff members can email **VOICES** with their questions or concerns using this form: www.voices.umich.edu/yourvoice.html.

Where can I get more information about VOICES?

For more information about VOICES, go to www.voices.umich.edu