



**VOICES OF  
THE STAFF**





# **VOICES of the Staff**

## **An Introduction**



# Overview

- Where It All Began
- The Design
- Outcomes and Successes
- What the Future Holds



# The Spark That Started It All

- “...[staff] pointed out that there is no structured mechanism for staff to have a voice to the administration. I want to recognize the importance of staff in our community – the work of staff supports every learning activity of this campus....We are looking forward to beginning work on a means by which staff interests can and will be more fully considered.”

» President Coleman

Letter to Diversity Summit participants

March 16, 2004



# The Concept That Moved It Forward

- April 2004: President Coleman asks Assoc VP Laurita Thomas to propose a structure that would:
  - Provide University staff with a “voice”
  - Provide a staff sounding board for the Executive Officers
- Unprecedented opportunity for campus-wide staff communication and involvement
- Laurita Thomas, AVP UHR in 2004, asks:
  - How can this be done on sufficient scale to create “involvement,” in a staff population of 30,000?
  - What have other universities tried?



# Exploring Options

- Inquiring about “Best Practices” from other universities
  - *RESULT: Nearly all consist only of professional, or state-classified staff; not broad enough*
- Reviewed research on employee engagement
  - Towers-Perrin report
  - Corporate Leadership Council



# What Creates Employee Engagement?

- It's not just about pay and benefits
  - *They primarily affect retention*
  - *“Endurance,” not “engagement”*
- Having meaningful work
- Making a difference
- Being heard
- Being respected
- Being appreciated
  - *These drive engagement*



# Designing For Success

- ALL regular staff – all campuses, all job types – to share this opportunity
- Individuals will be able to volunteer for service, *with the support of their supervisor*
- Design must respect the value of staff time
- Agenda should be set in collaboration with administration: Executive Officers participate in and approve selection of topics
- Voices of the Staff will be a “microcosm” of U-M’s overall staff population





# VOICES Structure

- Approximately 100 staff members from all areas of the University community serve on Network Teams focused on six key topics
- Network Teams of 15-20 members meet once a month for 1.5 hours to discuss their team's topic
- Network Team members are chosen annually from a pool of applicants, representing a microcosm of the U-M community based on work location, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- Volunteers must have supervisor approval to participate and at least one year of U-M service in good standing



# Network Teams

- Attend monthly meetings for discussion and project work
- Explore topics important to all staff
- Create great ideas to build on strengths and advance U-M goals and missions
- Gather information on best practices
- Share ideas with appropriate departments, HR or Executive Officers to consider at the University level
- Develop detailed proposals for new programs or ideas
- Implement actions when in-scope and approved



# Core Team

- Each Network Team selects two members for the Core Team
- Attend quarterly meetings with senior leadership
- Share information about their team's progress with the rest of the VOICES Network Teams
- Provide input on campus-wide topics to leadership
  - Topics include: stem cell research, M-Care, Michigan Difference campaign, pandemic planning





# Thank You!

**Thank you for taking the time to learn more about VOICES of the Staff today!**

**Questions?**

**Comments?**

**Thoughts?**





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# INPUT. DIALOGUE. RESULTS.

