



voices.umich.edu

## Talking Points for Staff

### Background Information

Voices of the Staff is a volunteer-based program that was established in February 2005 to create a formal mechanism for University of Michigan staff members to have a dialogue with the President and Executive Officers on issues of substance, identify and share ideas about the campus issues that matter most to staff, and communicate creative approaches to improving the University community. The program is modeled on best-practice employee engagement programs in high-performing organizations.

### Voices of the Staff Mission Statement

VOICES of the Staff will encourage a sense of community among all University employees by promoting and facilitating staff participation through regular dialogue between the VOICES team and Executive Officers where the staff perspective will provide insight in improving the University system for all.

In March 2008, VOICES received approval from U-M executive leadership to transition from a three-year pilot to a sustained and ongoing program of the University. Along with the announced continuation, VOICES funding has been increased so that the program may continue to support the work of its six topic-focused Network Teams, broaden development opportunities for volunteers, and offer key events, such as an annual Supervisors' Conference.

### 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

### Critical success factors contributing to VOICES continuing success are:

- The passion, enthusiasm, talents and commitment of the VOICES Network Team members and Program Management Team
- The involvement and commitment of the Executive Officers
- The support of the supervisors and managers who allow release time for this important initiative
- The interest and input from the U-M community

### VOICES Structure

About 120 staff members from all areas of the University community serve as volunteers on Network Teams focused on six key topics. Teams of 15-25 Network Team volunteers meet once a month for 1.5 hours to discuss their team's topic. A subset of that group, the VOICES Core Team, composed of two members from each Network 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.

### Member Selection Process

VOICES Network Team volunteers are chosen annually from an overall pool of applicants to represent a microcosm of the U-M Staff community based on work location, gender, ethnicity and other factors. *Volunteers must have supervisor approval to participate and at least one year of regular U-M service in good standing.* Training is provided to network members so that they may participate fully and effectively in the process.

### 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.

### 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.

### What are the Network Team topics?

Network Team	Area of Focus
Career Development	In support of promoting career and leadership development
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Becoming cultural champions to promote an inclusive and welcoming community
Embracing Change	Promoting capacity for resiliency and change in the future of work
Ideal Work Experience	Finding ways to enhance the work experience for all
Leveraging Technology	Using technology now and in the future to enhance the work experience
Work/Life Balance	Successfully balancing work demands with lifestyles

### VOICES Accomplishments

- Network Team Members received unique professional development opportunities
- Supplied staff input on significant campus issues
- Received funding for a University-wide career services function
- Partnered with Benefits Office on improved benefit plans
- Improved Parking & Transportation services
- Received funding to enhance faculty/staff and supervisor/staff communications
- Enhanced access to deals and discount information for faculty and staff
- Presented a conference for managers and supervisors focused on enhancing staff engagement
- Inspired work at local levels through creation of spin-off projects like Ross School of Business' FAST Connections

### VOICES Vision

- Focus energy on staff engagement
- Extend VOICES reach and influence into the U-M community
- Create broad and imaginative new channels of communication
- Inspire the staff community to understand their own and each other's value and talents

### 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](http://www.voices.umich.edu/yourvoice.html).



**INPUT. DIALOG.  
RESULTS.**

VOICES of the Staff is a volunteer-based program that gives U-M Staff members a forum for sharing ideas and defining the campus community issues that matter most to them. For more information, visit [voices.umich.edu](http://voices.umich.edu)

