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Talking Points for Supervisors

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 15-20 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 U-M service in good standing.* Training is provided to network members so that they may participate fully and effectively in the process.

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 Vision

- Focus energy on staff engagement
- Extend VOICES reach and influence into the U-M community
- Create broad and imaginative new channels of communication
- Provide leadership so that all staff members have a clear and informed vision of, and commitment to, the goals and missions of the University
- Inspire the staff community to understand their own and each other's value and talents

VOICES Strategy

- Enhance Network Team creativity and effectiveness
- Develop expanded communication channels
- Extend outreach to staff
- Improve access to information about the University and its resources



**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

