

**Proposal Presented to President Shirley Raines  
by  
The University of Memphis Staff Senate  
November 8, 2012**

Results of a recent survey conducted by the Staff Senate reveal that almost all staff members are proud to work at the University of Memphis. By and large, employees are satisfied with leadership, both at the department level and at the higher administration level. More than half of employees who responded to the survey said they are valued, and their talents are appreciated by their supervisors. Also, more than half of the staff is satisfied with available training that supports their professional growth, and they are satisfied with opportunities to advance along their career path. The one question that did not get a favorable response was the one about being fairly compensated.

Some issues were pointed out in the comments section of the survey and, if addressed, could make the University of Memphis an even greater place to work. Below are recommendations:

**Issues Regarding Training:**

*Diversity/Sensitivity Training*

An expressed desire to see more interaction among ethnic groups on campus (specifically among student groups) is needed. Others expressed dismay over lack of sensitivity by fellow employees and management toward specific ethnic groups or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT) faculty, staff and students.

- **Staff Senate Suggestion:**

Extend diversity and sensitivity training and encourage staff, faculty and all levels of management to attend.

- **Dr. Raines Comments:**

There is already a great deal of training available regarding racial diversity and sensitivity, but that there is not as much regarding LGBT. She said that she will check on the status of the LGBT training, particularly through the Office of Affirmative Action at TBR, and with Sherry Lipman in the Office of Legal Counsel.

Dr. Raines noted that there is a difference between the things that can be *required* and the things that can be *recommended*.

Dr. Raines suggested that the Staff Senate pilot a training program on diversity and sensitivity. This could be similar to the online Affirmative Action training that is currently in place. Being online, it can reach everyone on campus, and can be available over a long period of time. This may be preferable to a single session on the topic. She also suggested that the Staff Senate partner with the Faculty Senate on this project. Pam noted that partnering between the Staff and Faculty Senates has already begun, as well as partnering with the Student Government Association.

- **HR Comments:**

Diversity/Sensitivity Training will be discussed with the new Affirmative Action Director in an effort to expand and strengthen our current programs. HR is currently working with BFSS to identify/develop an attendance tracking mechanism to ascertain that faculty/staff attend the program.

### *Staff Training*

It was noted that specific new skills would enhance their ability to provide good customer service. Specifically it was suggested that the University provide staff training in computer software.

- **Staff Senate Suggestion:**

Include language classes and more computer (i.e. Adobe) classes in the Learning Curve courses.

- **Dr. Raines Comments:**

Scholarships are already in place and available to all staff to take courses for credit or for audit. Also, training is currently offered through Human Resources, and that is available to all staff. It was suggested that the Staff Senate promote these classes. One idea is to work with Greg Russell and provide a focus on scholarship availability and taking courses through publications such as the Update (it may resonate best with people to present the story of a particular staff who benefitted from the scholarship).

- **HR Comments:**

Computer courses are available through the online training program; however, the Training Department also periodically offers programs in this area.

### *Leadership Training*

It was suggested that all supervisors and directors receive leadership training that would promote staff productivity and morale. A recommendation of specific training for their management to include:

Communicating with their staff,  
University of Memphis policies,  
Motivating their staff,  
Staff recognition,  
Respecting one another,  
Time management,  
Promoting teamwork,  
Controlling gossip, and  
Conducting employee evaluations.

- **Staff Senate Suggestion:**

Require directors and supervisors to attend training workshops, seminars, brown bag lunches and/or online tutorials to develop management skills.

- **Dr. Raines Comments:**

David Zettergren and Maria Alum should be part of a follow-up meeting about this topic. She suggested that Maria speak to the Staff Senate to describe the processes in place for voicing grievances, whistleblowing, and employee evaluations.

- **HR Comments:**

As part of the Classification Redesign Initiative, individualized position descriptions are being developed for all staff. All new position descriptions will carry a minimum training requirement component that in the case of supervisory positions will address the topics specified above.

#### *Employee Evaluations/Performance Review*

Frequent comments were of a lack of employee evaluations, infrequent evaluations, inconsistent evaluations, and frustration over inadequate feedback from their evaluations. Many associate the lack of employee evaluations with a lack of recognition, merit pay, and promotions.

- **Staff Senate Suggestion:**

Ask HR to provide training for management on conducting consistent and equitable performance reviews and then require that evaluations be conducted on a regular basis.

- **Dr. Raines Comments:**

Dr. Raines clarified the association between employee evaluations and merit pay. There is very little money available for merit pay, but when it is available, there needs to be evidence of past performance in the form of employee evaluations.

Hugh noted the importance of staff recognition, and the importance of having supervisors participate in the employee recognition programs.

- **HR Comments:**

HR currently offers training to supervisors in the area of performance reviews. Additionally, the HR-Office of Employee Relations & Engagement is currently researching best practices in Performance Management/Appraisals for future implementation. Once the new program is in place, extensive training will be available.

#### **Issues Regarding Policies**

##### *Grievance Processes*

Frequent comments expressed various grievances, such as dissatisfaction with a University policy or procedure, problems with a fellow employee or management, or even questionable or dishonest behavior. It has been reported that “going through proper channels” to report grievances had inadequate or adverse results. Additionally, following the chain of command is not advantageous in all situations, if management is the issue. Some comments expressed distrust with the whistleblower process.

- **Staff Senate Suggestion:**

Make staff aware of policies concerning the grievance process, and the whistleblower process. If the policies do not exist, establish a committee to review these topics.

- **Dr. Raines Comments:**

Dr. Raines clarified the process and stressed going through the proper channels first. She also noted that if the grievance involves legal issues, that channel may be the Affirmative Action Office or Office of Legal Counsel; if the grievance involves other issues, HR is available to turn to. If those avenues are not productive, staff may bring the issue to the President’s Office. She acknowledged the need to help staff understand the policies that are currently in place. She also

noted that if there is a question about the proper channels, staff may ask their supervisor what the process is.

Pam suggested that the Staff Senate articulate this information to the staff.

- **HR Comments:**

Training on the grievance policy and process will be made available to employees to make sure all are aware of the venues available at the university to resolve issues.

## **Job Classification, Security, Promotions and Compensation**

### *Job Reclassification*

Several comments noted inequity in actual job roles and responsibilities by people with identical job titles and a review to standardize the positions would be welcomed, as well as re-title people who are performing functions outside of their current classification. A deep concern over the job reclassification process currently undertaken by Human Resources was voiced.

### *Job Security*

There are strong concerns about layoffs and job security at the U of M.

- **Dr. Raines Comments:**

That this is a concern to everyone these days. She also noted that job security is directly tied to student enrollment, and great customer service to our students is the answer to maintaining funding and jobs.

### *Advancement Opportunities/promotions*

Disappointment was expressed at the lack of advancement opportunities and promotion opportunities within a unit. Several noted that one has to leave their current department in order to be promoted.

### *Salaries*

Dissatisfaction with compensation, recent raises, lack of overtime and lack of extra compensation was mentioned throughout the comments. Several noted pay inequities between long-time employees and new-hires, and between colleges.

- **Staff Senate Suggestion:**

Have HR disseminate more information about the job reclassification process and the staff promotion policy as well as information on salaries and the University's policy on how salaries are established. Transparency of future buyouts and layoffs should be communicated early. If the policies do not exist, establish a committee to review these topics.

- **HR Comments:**

TBR is currently in the process of revising the Compensation policy and once it is finalized, the University policy will be updated with the new changes. With the revised policy in place and as part of the new Compensation and Classification Plan implementation, information will be disseminated to employees through the "HR on Campus" newsletter, HR Partners meetings, and general correspondence.

## **Other**

### *Miscellaneous Issues*

Some expressed of gratitude for an opportunity to give their opinions while others expressed frustration that their voice is never heard even when they respond to surveys.

- **Staff Senate Suggestion:**

A return to First Fridays is recommended for further engagement between Administration and Staff. Increase in financial support for Staff Senate to enable the senate more and better visibility. Allow fundraising opportunities to help fund senate activities such as the Staff Appreciation Day event. Allow more visibility by way of senators welcoming new employees that go through orientation process and visibility on the University's website.

- **Dr. Raines Comments:**

Pam noted that the Staff Senate website has been improved to include a suggestion box, and a link to Dr. Raines' presentation to the Senate.

Dr. Raines said that First Fridays may be re-started and it could rotate speakers. She suggested that the Staff Senate could help with it, and restructure it so that it is not so much of a "gripe-fest." She also suggested that the Staff and Faculty Senates could work in combination on this, because so many of the issues brought up apply across the board to both groups.

Hugh noted that in addition to presenting information, First Fridays may also serve as an opportunity for fellowship.

- **HR Comments:**

The HR-Employee Relations & Engagement Office is currently researching best practices and looking for ways to expand the Employee Recognition Program. HR welcomes the opportunity to partner with the Staff Senate in working towards expanding the staff recognition programs.

The suggestion regarding First Fridays has already been addressed by Dr. Raines.

## **Examples of What Other Tennessee Board of Regents Schools are Doing for Their Staff:**

### ***Tennessee State University***

Their Staff Senate highlights one office per month with an article in the HR newsletter. The office receives a crystal trophy, and employees are treated to brunch. Also, employees are encouraged to attend professional development seminars, and those who attend five consecutive seminars are given a Kindle Fire. The TSU Staff Senate also has a fundraiser, which earns \$1,000 for the Staff Senate.

### ***East Tennessee State University***

To address their morale problems, ETSU has increased visibility of the Staff Senate so that employees can voice issues. Some employees are being delegated higher level responsibilities without the benefit of a reclassification of their positions. Therefore, the Staff Senate has asked administration to utilize a job audit pool to re-establish office budgets in order to assist in paying for promotions beyond departments' budgeted salaries. Additionally, a pantry has been stocked to help employees and students in need, and two days a week during the summer ETSU partners with the Salvation Army to provide lunches for the staff.

### ***Austin Peay State University***

APSU is the only Tennessee public university on the 2012 “Great Colleges to Work For” list. The president of the Staff Senate attributes the good morale on campus to the university president’s leadership, which creates an environment that values employees. They see no need for a plan to improve working conditions because staff members are always engaged in campus governance. For example, several forums to discuss the campus Master Plan are being conducted, and one is for staff members only. Also, the university president has allotted adequate funds to the Staff Senate, which includes funds for the annual staff appreciation day. The university president attends Staff Senate meetings to update members about campus events and TBR and to provide other information pertinent to staff.

The University of Memphis Staff Senate is willing to work with administration toward the goal of being included on the next “Great Colleges to Work For” list.

**Dr. Raines Comments:**

Pam and Hugh requested additional funds for Staff Appreciation Day. Hugh noted that \$4,000 is not enough, and that past years’ funding have been supplemented to provide a barbeque meal for the staff. Dr. Raines said that she would check with David Zettergren about getting additional money.

Pam noted that she had a discussion with Bobby Prince and Kay Lee about finding a donor to supplement the Staff Senate funding.

Dr. Raines noted that fundraising by charities on campus is restricted to a single day per year, and that participating charities must serve, or be able to serve, the UofM staff and students. She also noted that the Staff Senate’s annual holiday food drive is an exception to TBR policies. Fundraising events such as food and item sales, and bake sales are against policy.

Dr. Raines noted that not all of the Tennessee Institutions of Higher Education have a Staff Senate.

Jean said that she will check with the Chronicle to get past workforce survey data for trend analysis and comparison with our survey.

**HR Comments:**

The Great Colleges to Work For is in the beginning stages for the 2013 year. HR welcomes the opportunity to partner with the Staff Senate to promote employees participation in the survey and to work together towards having the University of Memphis recognized as part of the Great College to Work For.