



2005-06: Recommendations for Inclusion of Labor Staff as Valued Members of the University Community

Introduction and Background

The inclusion of Labor staff in full participation in the University community is an issue WACFO had been grappling with for thirty years. One of the ways it has manifested is in the low attendance of labor women at the WACFO annual forum. This issue was also reflected in difficulty in recruiting and retaining members to fill open labor committee seats. The lack of labor respondents to 'Status of Women' survey concerned the 'Status of Women Design and Oversight Task Force' WACFO representatives. The WACFO Diversity and Pluralism committee began to address whether or not labor women have computer access to participate in a Web based survey.

The WACFO Diversity & Pluralism committee had begun discussion regarding issues of inclusion and status/ class on campus. In response to zero respondents on the 'Status of Women' survey from 999 and 1585, the Diversity & Pluralism committee took the lead by implementing some alternative approaches for gathering information from labor women. Diversity & Pluralism sub-committee assisted in developing and mailing a survey to send out to women in the 999, 1585, FOP, and FOP sergeants unions. This instrument was developed to get the valuable input of these women which resulted in a response rate of 20.05%.

Outreach

The Diversity and Pluralism sub-committee carried out the detailed work necessary to diagnose the lack of labor response which entailed:

- WACFO Diversity committee meetings held in Brody, Wilson and Hubbard cafeterias during normally staff lunch times to engage labor staff in conversations
- Surveys mailed to the homes of labor women
- Four (4) 'Conversations with Kathy' focused on labor staff concerns and issues

Three inclusion and communication issues surfaced as the top issues for labor women:

- Lack of ability to give meaningful input on work issues
- Lack of computer access
- Lack of inclusion in non-computer based University communication, i.e., not receiving campus mail...

Outcome

The following recommendations are an example of a rank based, non-gender, non-race focused inclusion plan. In addition, they address communication, which is the corner stone of inclusion.

- Recommendation #1: Enhance Computer Access and Training for Labor Staff
 - 1) Enhance **Computer Access** in physical plant and Housing and Food Services by physically locating computers based on ease of access in their daily work environment and privacy considerations.

- 2) **Develop Computer Training** that is focused on job duties, use of training on the job (use it or lose it); have HRD lead in the development of courses that are focused for those in the labor and trades area and encourage the use of educational assistance for technical training.

Possible Implementation Strategies -

- Unit defined Task force/Work group in Physical Plant and Housing and Food Services comprised of labor, non-labor, technology and HR staff to make recommendations and monitor implementation of process improvements in this area
 - Progress reports and changes that have been implemented should be provided to the Vice President for Finance and Operations annually
- Recommendation #2: Expand and Enhance Two-Way Communication Pathways Throughout Campus.
- Possible Implementation Strategies -*
- 360' degree evaluation processes
 - Provide ability to share ideas, insights and issues in a non-threatening environment, i.e., 'Conversations w/Kathy' Lindahl, focus groups...
 - Supervisor training on the value of input from and empowerment of staff
 - Inclusion of diverse 'levels' of staff on committees and teams
 - Transparency
 - Use of clear and direct lines of communication, i.e., mailing to home address