

Summer SUPERvisor Program 2016 - Group Discussion Results

How do you consistently determine eligibility for merit raise &/or admin leave?

- Determine eligibility and clearly understand the rules surrounding eligibility.
- Admin Leave:
 - Tie Admin leave award distribution to Annual review meeting with individual staff
 - Establish new time- line for process for requests and approvals for Admin leave. Hand out admin leave to staff during annual review.
 - Projects above and beyond what is in job description and evaluate performance on those projects.
 - Assess if admin leave is a reward or a burden depending upon the vacation accrual rates of the employee and employee's time off trend
 - Culture within the department....is it an expectation or a true reward for doing something outstanding?
 - One example: "Achieves" or higher, you get 16 hours. Leaves 16 hours to utilize as a reward throughout the year.
- Merit recommendations
 - Tie scores on Annual performance review to the funds.
 - Learning to deal with the uncertainty of the June to September timeline between recommendations and notifications.
 - Supervisor differences on annual evaluation may punish some individuals.
 - Look at dollar amounts and not just the %'s.
 - Look at performance goals and leverage those in making the decision.
 - Not a well-prescribed method that is recurring, but a well-prescribed process that changes from year-to-year
 - Department heads discuss with mid-managers and make the process at least somewhat equitable.
- One-time merit
 - It would help supervisors define and show employees how they would be eligible.
 - "If you save us X amount of time or money, this is used."
- Units get input from direct supervisors but process of awarding not always apparent
- There's a lot of confusion regarding the distribution of the merit pool and how to explain how the merit pool works as a whole. EX: Some units think that a 4% merit raise means that every employee in the unit will get a 4% raise
- Supervisors are discouraged from giving all employees the same raise, but then again some small units have a pool of all excellent staff
- Some units require that people to "go above and beyond," but if they don't know what that means they might not go above; in addition, they could "go above and beyond," but the next year the pool might not be available

- You want to retain quality staff but you can't always reward them
- Administrative leave—for some employees it is as valuable as a raise. Some units use the same criteria as for merit raise. Lots of confusion regarding transparency of this process
- Some employees get small raises such as 25 cents a year to distribute the pool evenly and that demoralizes and demotivates employees
- We want to make the process transparent to all employees regarding merit pay and admin leave
- How do you document your employees' performance and how your employees are documenting their own performance
- Difficult to define "above and beyond" in a concrete way to employees
- There seems to be a culture of secrecy. Supervisors don't communicate policies clearly to everyone and this secrecy is related to power issues regarding supervisors/staff
- Eligibility is based on evaluations.
- Suggest supervisors meet prior to evaluation to prepare
- What are other units doing, are they following a similar criterion to define exceeds etc...
- Record good and bad performance per employee throughout the year.
- Carefully create Performance plans to enable and encourage growth throughout the year.
- Performance Goals
 - Ask employees to send their accomplishments and goals achieved

How do you recognize staff?

- Administrative leave

- Recognize them in staff meetings {shout-outs, gift cards (claim on taxes?), etc.}
- Promotions
- Merit increases
- Award/professional membership nominations
- Personal note/email
- Gift cards (personal expense)
- Fill your bucket with positive actions observed
- Use of an individual strengths
- Put notes and such up on the door of their office
- Organizational wide recognition (i.e., shout out board)
- Team building and recognition of priorities for each individual
- Annual staff increases
- Providing breakfast or lunch (monthly or bi-monthly)
- After hours social events
- Professional development opportunities
- Flex time
- Service years recognition, 2, 5, 10, 15, etc.
- Incentives for certifications
- 2 staff gatherings; winter banquet and spring fling; involve the families; present employee of the semester awards (both full time and student); years of services awards
- 2x month email kudos from customer feedback forms
- winning teams in walk across Texas got a lunch
- Staff Appreciation Week and other university-wide events
- themed days for small gifts
- golden apple recognition passed around
- tailgate party on Friday; spirit awards and table decorations
- Christmas ham
- hosts a Christmas party at home
- birthday recognitions
- professional development; travel conferences when possible
- look for fellowships, scholarships from organizations for conference attendance
- create spirit/recognition/social committees

How do you discuss/address equity issues with staff?

- Unit director usually is more involved with the process than the direct supervisor.

- Monthly PATH meetings are held with supervisees so whether an equity issue comes up during that or independent of that, it will be usually addressed between the supervisor and supervisee and possibly the director brought in as needed.
- No due to low staff, we do not have a lot of time to focus on this thoroughly When looking at hiring, address diversity and address issues on a case-by-case basis.
- Low pay for staff across the board is a challenge to maintain equity compared to other institutions - cannot compete to hire, much less retain staff, when investing so much time, including student workers and full-time staff.
- “This is the way we have always done it.” As problems get bigger and workload is increasing, investing in change is essential to improve work output by increasing efficiency.
- Some supervisors have very little say in rewarding employees (done at a level higher than supervisor) therefore cannot address equity with employees because they don't know how it rewards/merit are assigned
- We don't, process to increase staff and reward staff is soooo much work and causes supervisor to get further and further behind while trying to navigate the process that tend to give up
- I resist bringing it up because I don't have control over the outcome
- Many areas have staff with no career ladder, they are hired in at one level and that is the level they remain. Have to rely on merit for reward even when supervisor might not influence the merit.
- Many outsiders do not realize research administration is a career path.
- Would be nice to have a research administration degree program in Texas. What would curriculum be? Project management seems to be the key word,
- How do we get people in research administration?
- IT can easily go out and double their salaries. They like the environment. They have flexibility in their jobs that they couldn't have in corporate world.
- Wellness initiative to help with tuition is a great benefit. Option to go to school has been there, but most did not know about it. There are scholarships, etc., out there on campus,, you just have to go looking for them. At another institution, we could take a class and present favorable grade and receive reimbursement. Think this is the first time at TAMU has had this tuition assistance program for staff.
- Have had many employees that signed up for classes and the workload was so overwhelming, they didn't have time to take off for class.
- Think the mapping SRS is doing now is very productive. Think staff feel now that we are not sinking.
- Best service you can do at university is to serve time in a department. You learn much more about how things work, their point of view, etc.
- Would you feel as comfortable hiring someone from an academic department from another university.
- We don't feel comfortable reaching out to our department people and ask them to apply for our jobs in SRS.
- Equity issues: experienced great divide this year, and have asked to fix it. How do you deal with it? You fix it. Important for staff to provide equitable pay/titles.
- New people coming in with no experience being mentored by people with more experience and get paid less.
- I always wondered how management makes decisions on new people's pay. It sometimes throws my equity off. I would like to know ahead of time.

- Need to lay out every person and their pay. Need to put people where they belong
- In defense, have all these organizations that came together, we are still out of whack. Right now still in state of flux. Waiting on Price Waterhouse reports. We need to fix..
- Discussions are now stale. Tired of hearing about it.
- Until we have roles and responsibilities, how am I supposed to talk to my staff about it?
- Can't supervise my group of diverse people who do so many different things.
- If we need to discuss a payroll issue across teams, it is difficult when you can't figure out what they're working on.
- Position Descriptions should have been written for the team leads.
- Decision for new leaders was rushed.
- We need to acknowledge we are in a unique situation. We have had a lot of change.
- Now we are all together, we can work on these issues.
- On the Road to Utopia – want to create areas in the building where people are comfortable. EX: not having a window is a huge detriment at work. It affects people.
- A comfortable workspace is important.
- Difficult to make 200 people happy.
- Have put through request for equity increase. They said she was in line with everyone else, so she didn't get it. She was \$4000 less than others.
- Is it based on job description? Is it based on what your contributions are?

How do you balance job duties and staff development responsibilities?

- Challenge: Staff development = more time than you think
- Opportunity: Create a staff development committee/strategic planning committee
- Time off vs Employee Job Expectations: How to determine who gets off and for how long
- Challenge: How to say No, but

- Opportunity: Setting expectations and meeting those goals for personal growth of employees. No Set number to complete
- Challenge: Getting employee buy-in on personal growth and development
- Opportunity: Cross-Training to relieve stress when employees are out for training/development
- Opportunity: Mentoring program for new supervisors
- Sometimes it is easier to do the job yourself than to train someone else to do it.
- Challenge: difference between hourly staff and salary staff in terms of duties. More challenges with salaried staff because their responsibilities are not relieved when they are away at training. Hourly staff tend to be relieved of duties while at training because someone else will fill in for them.
- Internal training can be very time consuming. Follow-up is necessary.
- Some tasks are so infrequent that training needs to be repeated each time the task comes up.
- Challenge: getting time for supervisor to complete their assignments while doing training.
- Challenge: High demand levels do not create opportunities for staff development; do not have the coverage to allow time for professional development.
- Challenge: Spending quality time training new employees during business hours requires staying late to complete your work.
- Expected that on returning from a conference, the attendee will report what was learned, what was the takeaway.

Consensus—it takes about six months to a year to train a new staff member to handle processes and understand unit responsibilities. Exception—8 week intensive training for Advise Texas, entry level positions, “finished training” does take about a year.

- Commitment to supporting employees to pursue certifications, weekly lunch and learn aimed at certs.
- Talk about at weekly leadership meeting—who will be out, all leaders take part in every aspect of work in office.
- Clear message that professional development is available, funds available, go to conferences, EOD training. Encouragement during Annual Review to commit to EOD.
- Bring in groups to train staff.
- Self development and professional development—book club. Grit by Angela Duckworth. What do you want from professional development? List opportunities on resume.
- Professional development budget. Use is part of professional goals. Back up for each person so they feel comfortable being out.
- Workshop or conference that provides diversity or inclusion aspect. Overnight.

How do we deal with people who are turning over in six months to a year when training takes a year to be comfortable and productive?

- Identify the “ones in the middle” who are good and receptive to feedback.
- Constant coaching.
- Address need for constant gratification by constant ego stroking and other rewards.
- Succession planning issues.

- Sign list of expectations.

How do you identify/help staff with inappropriate stress levels?

- Evaluating the work load
- Identifying the passive aggressive behaviors
- Adapted to the constant changing environment, communicating and educating cycles and something else comes up unexpected
- Identifying snarky comments recognitions
- Make sure staff is getting the communications from leadership
- Trying to line up the leadership staff meetings to share updates with staff
- Can't always give the why? We have to do things and create band of brothers atmosphere.
- Close door gripe sessions with supervisors to voice concerns and then teams need to put on smile and get work done.

- Asking for help in time of need: How can they ask for help and who can they ask is not always clearly communicated to staff.
- Challenging for supervisors when pulled away to meetings and don't always recognize.
- Taking walking meetings and taking breaks.
- Identify and help inappropriate stress
- Taking a time to have the lunchtime break with the whole staff when the office must remain open is beneficial but challenging.
- Work life/ Balance
- Creating a sense of trust with staff to be empowered to them to get job done. Relieves stress.
- Change management sometimes doesn't happen due to time constraints of top decisions and customer external complaints
- Supervisor or employee lashing out, vocalizing
- Withdrawn or not displaying their potential because they are paralyzed
- Take out stress on other staff members
- Scared for own safety
- Civility of parents and students are declining
- IT causes stress, need additional help in this area
- Additional security causes stress as well
- Training
- What to do when situation escalates, make a safe environment
- Utilize EAP group for training
- Permission to close door or take a 10 or 15 minute break
- Create place to get away, even a small breakroom
- Windows, physical environment is important

Barriers:

- Difficulty managing our own stress levels (makes recognizing staff stress difficult)
- Career Minded vs. Student worker (or figure out something else)
- Lack of investment
- Lack of privacy / changing work environments
- Levels of management

Suggestions:

- General check in with staff
- Isolate if a high tension moment arrives
- Small group discussions - Need consistent goals; guidelines on staff discussions
 - Training events
 - Coordinator meeting with staff (open discussion)
- Genuinely listen
- Be aware of transference of negative emotions to
- Be aware of seasonal nature and utilize flex hour policy
- Potlucks and birthday celebrations/ smaller recognition parties
 - Rotate so one person does not have the burden on them
 - Improved interaction

- Utilizing wellness leave
- Informal interaction
- Define clear prioritization of projects

Recognize:

- Open Door Policy
- Gender differences - EI
- Identifying people who know the heartbeat of the group
- Outlet for voicing
- Proactive approach, ask questions
- Asking questions - Be Visible
- Short responses to direct questions

How do you promote the Wellness Initiative and manage the workload?

- No one has been denied – it is the employee’s choice to submit a request
- Supervisor or office tracks a calendar or spreadsheet of who will be off and when
- Require employee to fill out the form on the HR website
- Some employees do not take time off due to feeling like they have to get stuff done, employee choice
- Some take it as a form of stress relief so they can come back rejuvenated
- An employee wants to take educational leave for school and wellness leave....Have to evaluate the office and who is there to determine what is feasible and doesn’t burden the rest of the staff.
- It’s a great idea.
- Coverage is an issue - had to create a schedule to ensure coverage.
- Challenging for supervisors to schedule. Supposed to leave early, but can’t get away from work.

- If your office is on flex schedules so the wellness is easier for them because they are on different schedules anyway
- In theory it is a good idea, but implementing it is unrealistic because of work schedules
- There needs to be more accountability. It can easily be abused.
- The guidelines are a little vague.
- What happens when it's rush time and they can't take the time because of the work load
- We made everyone aware of the initiative when it was announced and told them how to submit their request if they were interested.
- We made sure to communicate with them that while we would like to accommodate everyone's request, we would have to make sure office coverage wasn't severely impacted and that they may need to be flexible with their requested day/times. We made them aware that they should consider mornings and lunch, and not just leaving early in the afternoons.
- We also indicated the agreement would have to be re-submitted each semester since we have a lot of student worker help and their schedules change every semester, therefore, our ability to accommodate the requests may vary each semester. We tried to manage the staff's expectations up front.