



A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON

Professional Development and Training



Presented by
The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
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Approved by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
and sent forward to the President

Prepared by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
Annual committee on Professional Development and Training

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Executive Summary

Staff Council created the Professional Development and Training Committee at its annual retreat to identify, promote, and propose professional development solutions and training opportunities for all staff.

The bulk of our work involved polling staff individually and using an online survey to gather information about what professional development programs staff want to participate in and any obstacles they experience.

From the feedback we gathered, the committee created a proposal for a pilot program to fund individual development grants. This program, to be administered through partnership with CareerSmart — the university's gateway to professional development — would distribute grants to participants in the *Essentials for Developmental Excellence* and *Managing Beyond the Basics* programs. This pilot will address staff needs for individual career development while leveraging CareerSmart coaching and infrastructure, thereby minimizing start-up costs and administrative overhead. Simultaneously, we believe this partnership with CareerSmart will increase program accessibility and return on investment.

Introduction

The recent campus-wide launch of Lynda.com has given university staff unprecedented access to powerful online tools for skills development, and staff are taking advantage. In its first year, the program has 9,200 total users who have watched 264,288 videos and completed 2,608 certificates. From this numeric standpoint, the program's impact has been massive, and continues growing. However, staff continue expressing interest in development opportunities that fall outside the scope of Lynda.com. We believe the program outlined below can begin meeting this demand.

Gauging Staff Needs

The committee began by reaching out to representatives' constituents. Committee members received varied feedback, but a common theme emerged. Most staff requests centered on a desire for a holistic, personal development plan articulated by the individual. Many felt their development was constrained by the requirements of their job title and wanted to branch out in new ways. Based on this feedback, the committee began exploring options for a development program driven by individual staff members.

Deciding more information was needed, the committee commissioned a Qualtrics survey asking two questions:

1. What training/development opportunities do you wish you could pursue that are not directly related to your current job or position?
2. What are the obstacles to you pursuing these opportunities?

We receive 124 responses in total.

The answers to question one broke down into roughly four categories:

1. Academic centered
 - i. Foreign language, creative writing, accounting, engineering

2. Skills centered
 - i. Computer programming, social media, HR, management, internet security, data networking, predictive analytics, marketing, public speaking, statistics, NPO fundraising, leadership, financial management, IT, diversity and social issues, graphic design, project management, resume writing, electrical equipment
3. Personal growth centered
 - i. Wellness, stock market, photography, crafts
4. Other UT/academic career opportunities
 - i. Grant writing, grant administration, event planning, campus libraries and museums, web design, business process evaluation

Given the diversity of responses, the committee concluded that additional structure might be needed to facilitate an individually driven program encompassing so many different kinds of training.

The response to the second question was far more definitive: 63 of 124 responses cited time and money as obstacles, and 14 more cited lack of administrative or management support as an obstacle.

Developing a Business Plan

Even though this survey was a small, unscientific sample, its conclusions match much of the anecdotal feedback Staff Council representatives have received. After analyzing this data the committee decided to begin developing a business plan for a pilot program that would make funds available for training and address management best practices.

We initially discussed creating an infrastructure within Staff Council for accepting applications and awarding funds. The consensus among membership was that this would be impractical, so we consulted with Human Resources for alternatives.

Working with HR's Organization Effectiveness team, we landed on a solution to leverage two CareerSmart programs that would provide structure to our process and provide an accountable means of disbursing the funds.

To provide individual development grants, our plan calls for using the *Essentials for Developmental Excellence* (EdE) program as a vehicle to award grants. EdE is a highly customizable experience designed specifically to help staff define and meet professional development goals. It is a program intended for employees seeking to:

- Increase their skills and competencies
- Grow in their current job
- Prepare for the future

Staff who wish to define their own professional development plan will gain access to confidential career coaching professionals who can provide both valuable experience and structure to their plans. The CareerSmart coaches will work one-on-one with the participant to craft a plan that will achieve their goals and fit best within their individual circumstances.

Based on cursory research of many "pay-to-play" development opportunities, Staff Council plans to award individual grants of up to \$600.

For the management side we plan to remove obstacles to participation in CareerSmart's *Managing Beyond the Basics* program, which provides an opportunity to assess management strengths and challenges through 360° feedback facilitated by a certified coach. After the 360° feedback process is completed, participants work on three elective options that focus on their specific personal development goals. Experience has demonstrated that the \$300 cost of the 360° training hinders participation. Based on feedback from Organization Effectiveness, we are therefore proposing that 15% of all funds dedicated to this staff development program be reserved to sponsor 360° training.

We anticipate a simple, straightforward application process. Key components for eligibility

include supervisory approval and documented consultation with Organization Effectiveness, a commitment to meet with the Staff Council's executive committee and discuss their experience (anonymous if necessary/requested), and application made with adequate lead time to process payments (currently estimated at 90 days advance notice). As qualified applications are received, awards will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Proposed application forms are included as appendices.

Conclusion

The Professional Development and Training Committee hopes that this pilot will broadly increase staff awareness of and access to development opportunities within and outside the university. Through analysis of this program we also hope to help measure professional development's impact and value added. Staff Council believes that a well-developed staff encourages a spirit of innovation and is key to building a culture of engagement.

Appendix 1

Application for Staff Development Funds

Name:

Position:

Unit/Department:

Proposed Activity:

Date/s of Activity:

Location/s of Activity:

Development Goal:

Activity Objective:

Funding Request (requests above X \$ may require additional documentation and be subject to further review; otherwise, funding is contingent on availability. Funds may not be used to support 360 Review training):

I certify that I am enrolled in CareerSmart's EdE certificate, have had a coaching session with a CareerSmart professional, and that a CareerSmart professional has endorsed this activity as part of my development plan (initial) (documentation attached)

I certify that my supervisor approves of my participation in this activity (initial) (documentation attached)

I certify that any travel authorizations or compliance with any other university regulations and procedures associated with this activity have been received, approved, and/or adhered to (initial) (documentation attached)

Within six months of participation, I agree to meet with the UTSC executive committee or its designated representative to discuss my use of these funds (initial)

I certify that I am submitting this application on my own behalf, and that the funds will be used to support my participation in the proposed activity (initial)

Signature and Date

Appendix 2

Application for 360 Assessment Funds

Name:

Position:

Unit/Department:

Date/s of Activity:

Funding Request:

I certify that I am applying for these funds to pay for a 360 assessment offered by the university (initial) (documentation attached)

I certify that my supervisor approves of my participation in this activity (initial) (documentation attached)

Within two months of participation, I agree to provide documentation to the UTSC executive committee or its designated representative that I have completed the 360 assessment and associated follow-up (initial)

Within six months of participation, I agree to meet with the UTSC executive committee or its designated representative to discuss my use of these funds (initial)

I certify that I am submitting this application on my own behalf, and that the funds will be used to support my participation in the proposed activity (initial)

Signature and Date

Appendix 3

Supervisor Approval of Staff Participation in Development Activity

Staff Member:

Supervisor:

Proposed Activity:

Date/s of Activity:

Location/s of Activity:

I certify that I supervise the staff member referenced above and that I approve of his/her participation in the proposed activity (initial)

I certify that the staff member referenced above meets or exceeds job expectations (initial)

Supervisor Printed Name

Supervisor Signature

Supervisor Date