



**A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON**

# **Education and Professional Development**



Presented by  
The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council  
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Annual committee on Education and Professional Development

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## **Executive Summary**

The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council committee on Education and Professional Development used the University Operations 2012 Survey of Employee Engagement (SEE) to identify and focus on two areas of improvement.

The first is the need to address fairness in the workplace by requiring new supervisors and managers to take additional training.

The second is the need to explore effective, affordable professional development avenues for all our staff and to research opportunities for IT development for all staff members.

We researched several options for both topics, and met with Human Resource Services to better understand how the proposed changes could be implemented. This report outlines that research and our recommendations going forward.

## **New Supervisor and Manager Training**

In 2012, University Operations within the University of Texas at Austin conducted a survey of employee engagement (SEE), to gather information on the ability of staff leadership to engage employees towards successfully fulfilling the vision and mission of the university.

The survey had two main parts: Construct Analysis and Climate Analysis. After the presentation of the survey to Staff Council in December 2012, constituents asked us to look into how the scores in the Climate Analysis could be improved.

The three areas most in need of improvement were Fairness, Feedback and Management.

- Fairness – measures the extent to which employees believe that equal and fair opportunity exists for all members of the organization
- Feedback – appropriate feedback is an essential element of organizational learning by providing the necessary data in which improvement can occur.
- Management – the climate by Management as being accessible, visible and an effective communicator of information is a basic tenant of successful leadership.

Scores below 350 are viewed less positively by employees. The Fairness category scored 350, the Feedback category scored 339, and the Management category scored 333.

According to the SEE, “the climate in which employees work does, to a large extent, determine the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization.”

The Corporate Leadership Council found in 2004 that certain manager traits above others had maximum impact on discretionary effort from subordinates. In parenthesis are the relevant areas of improvement found in UT’s University Operations survey.

Commitment to Diversity: **28.5%** (Fairness)

Demonstrates Honesty and Integrity: **27.9%** (Fairness)

Clearly Articulates Organizational Goals: **27.6%** (Management)

Accurately Evaluates Employee Potential: **26.3%** (Feedback)

Has a Good Reputation within the Organization: **26.0%** (Fairness, Management)

Quality of Informal Feedback: **25.6%** (Feedback, Management)

Based on the SEE definitions, Fairness would improve from management training on hiring, interviewing and conflict management. Feedback would improve from training for evaluations and communication. Management would improve through training on conflict management and communication.

While mandatory compliance training covers topics like workplace ethics, our committee is not aware of any required training specifically for supervisors/management, to ensure they meet a baseline standard of managerial skill across the University. Such training would likely raise job performance for non-management staff.

## Proposal One:

The overall best option we found for required management training was to utilize the CareerSmart Program, hosted by HRS. Classes through CareerSmart are readily accessible to all staff, as enrollment is done through the TXClass page on UTDirect. All TXClass offerings come at no additional cost.

CareerSmart already offers two Management Certificate Programs: Management Essentials and Managing Beyond the Basics. They include UT-specific management standards for:

- Interviewing
- Hiring
- Evaluations
- Timesheet Management, including Leave Management
- Conflict Management
- Workplace Ethics

To move toward ensuring our supervisors and managers meet standards across UT, we propose a policy requiring:

- The Management Essentials certification for **newly hired** supervisors and managers within 6-12 months of the appointment, and/or
- The Management Essentials certification as a **prerequisite** for supervisory or managerial job positions, when such a position is posted on the UT Austin Job Search as "*Current UT employees only*", or "*Current department employees only*".

We can't instantly force our supervisors and managers to have a baseline level of training, but we can slowly integrate that baseline as part of our culture and standards here at UT. It would go far in addressing the fairness, feedback and management areas of the University that were found to need improvement in the SEE survey.

## Research Opportunities for Professional Development Courses

A previous Staff Council committee, the Talent Management Committee (2011-2012) conducted a small survey focused on professional development demand across campus. This survey was sent via email in the spring of 2012, and 502 supervisors participated.

We recognize that not all supervisors from every area of the University responded, but the results indicated that professional development wasn't always positively viewed unless it was specific to a staff member's current job description. Supervisor comments indicated that they sometimes discouraged professional development, perhaps for fear of losing a staff member.

Our committee was asked to look into affordable and easily accessible professional development that all staff at the University could use across a variety of disciplines. Upon discussion with Staff Council, we found that most staff would like access to development courses for applications such as Microsoft Office, FileMaker Pro, and Adobe, and that most people would like the training to be online.

After doing some research, we determined Lynda.com was a highly attractive online training solution, for these reasons:

- Some UT Austin departments already use Lynda.com for professional development
- The site offers over 1,900 courses, and is designed for ease of use
- Other higher education institutions use Lynda.com (i.e. UT-Arlington, Penn State, Princeton, University of California, Davis, etc.)
- Affordability

We contacted the McCombs School of Business, Information Technology Services (ITS) and Human Resources (HRS) to find out information about obtaining access to Lynda.com professional development training.

Each department is utilizing or looking into Lynda.com in different ways. McCombs maintains 6,000 licenses for all staff, faculty and students in their department to use and they have been very pleased with the product and the participation of users. ITS purchased 10 licenses for ITS staff, and uses it as a reference when needed. HRS is looking into activating individual licenses for 1 month at a time to supplement training through CareerSmart.

Online professional development training is preferable over in-person training for staff members, as it more easily lets them maintain assigned work hours, doesn't interrupt the workflow of the department, and allows a more flexible, self-paced environment.

In-person professional development training offered off-campus can require travel requests, and/or University vehicles. Worse yet, the staff member is usually out of the office for most of the day, and cost is usually substantial.

For example, Fred Pryor is a commonly used in-person training company here in Austin. The two-day excel course costs \$128 per person. Lynda.com offers many different pricing options, starting at \$37.50 a month per person for unlimited online access to all 1,900+ courses.

### **Proposal Option One:**

The first proposal option, and our committee's recommendation, is to request funding to pay for a pilot program of Lynda.com's lyndaPro, which offers multi-user accounts, and comprehensive administrative tools for managing accounts and reports.

The pilot would be 20 licenses at \$300 per license per year. HRS is ready to administer the licenses to individuals for 1 month at a time, and to offer TXClass classes for up to 20 people at a time on commonly requested topics.

### **Proposal Option Two:**

Alternatively, we could provide access for all staff and faculty under Lynda.com's lyndaCampus, which provides premium-level membership to all users. Users each have a unique profile that maintains a history of their activity and offers a truly personalized experience, including sharable playlists & customized queues, access to certificates of completion, and the option to bookmark/tag content for future reference.

As the administrator, lyndaCampus provides extensive metrics and reporting features to track usage as a whole or at any level of individual detail. The cost to purchase this education solution for all UT Austin faculty and staff would be \$70,000 per year.

### **Proposal Option Three:**

The third option is Lynda.com's lyndaKiosk. This solution is optimized for learning labs and libraries. No log-ins or passwords would be required to get to the Lynda.com library content. Instead, this solution ties Lynda.com directly to the static IP address of the workstations. A UT Admin would have a login to pull up general usage reports. Otherwise no management is required. Pricing for this solution starts at \$1200 per workstation for 1-9 workstations. Price per workstation decreases the more licenses are purchased.

### **Conclusion**

We at the University of Texas at Austin Staff Council are committed to supporting all initiatives that improve the quality of life and effectiveness of the university's dedicated and valuable staff. We believe the above recommendations serve the interests of both the individual staff members and the University as a whole. Should any of our proposals not be feasible, we are open to alternative suggestions and/or implementations, and will be happy to collaborate with the University administration.