

University of Wyoming Staff Professional Development Program

Proposal, November 2017

Introduction

The University of Wyoming Staff Senate proposes a program in support of professional development for UW staff employees. This program would allow staff members to request funding for professional development opportunities from University reserve funds and allow for better tracking of and incentives for staff participation in professional development activities. Establishing a program in support of staff development is a crucial first step toward attaining Goal 4 of the 2017-2022 University Strategic Plan,¹ and will contribute to higher employee engagement and improved functioning of campus units.

Statement of Need

Research shows that institutions that make investments in professional development for their employees² and that provide their employees with the knowledge and resources they need to do their jobs well³ enjoy higher employee engagement. In turn, higher levels of engagement lead to improved performance,⁴ increased productivity, and a host of other benefits to the organization and its employees.⁵ Staff employees at the University of Wyoming have frequently reported to Staff Senate in surveys, electronic and written comments, and listening sessions that they experience a lack of opportunity and encouragement to engage in professional development. Providing financial support for professional development will address this concern while moving the University forward toward the desired outcome of building human capital.

Program Proposal

Staff Senate proposes that the University of Wyoming set aside a portion of its financial reserves to support professional development opportunities for University employees.

Funding Guidelines

Under this program professional development funding will be available to employees who are

1. Classified staff employees
2. Off probation
3. Participating in a professional development activity that
 - a. is related to their position at the University, or
 - b. prepares the staff member for new or increased responsibilities at the University

Funding can be used by staff employees for any of the following:

1. Registration for workshops, webinars, or courses
2. Membership in professional organizations
3. Participation in license or certificate programs
4. Registration and travel costs for regional or national conferences, trainings, or continuing education courses
5. Purchase of materials needed for workshops, webinars, conferences, or courses

Funding cannot be used for:

1. Tuition for courses that are available via the UW tuition waiver
2. Training courses and materials for licenses and certifications that are required for the employee's position, as listed in the PDQ. These should be funded out of the affected unit's budget.

Administrative Committee

A Staff Professional Development Committee will administer the program. The committee will include one designee each from Academic Affairs, Administration, Human Resources, Student Affairs, and Staff Senate, and will be chaired by the Staff Senate designee. Once a fund is established, the committee will work with the President and the Vice President for Administration to set funding award levels based on the type of activity and the amount of funding that is available each year. The committee will also develop a rubric to be used in evaluating applications and allocating funds.

On an ongoing basis, the committee will advertise the opportunity and make the application materials available to all staff. Applicants will be encouraged to seek matching funds from their department or from other sources where available. The committee will meet quarterly to review applications, and the recommendations of the committee will be forwarded to the President for approval.

Outcomes and Assessment

Program Outcomes

Data on the types of funding requests and the distribution of staff across campus who 1) submit applications, and 2) receive funding will be maintained by the Staff Professional Development Committee. Participants will be asked to provide feedback on their professional development activity once they have completed it, and this feedback will be included with the program data. The committee will be charged with reporting on this data annually, including a report on how the funding allocations made in the previous year support Goal 4 of the University's strategic plan. The committee will also be charged with reviewing the application and allocation process annually to ensure that staff from all divisions and job families are able to access professional development funding if desired, and to adjust for structural or cultural obstacles to access. The committee will solicit feedback from staff annually to document and address any concerns or reported obstacles to access.

Individual Employee Outcomes

Staff Senate strongly recommends that the annual performance evaluation tool used for staff employees be amended to include recognition of professional development activities completed throughout the year. In addition, we recommend that supervisor training include a special emphasis on the importance of providing professional development opportunities for all UW staff, and a discussion of how supervisors can support their employees as they initiate and pursue professional development activities.

Conclusion

The establishment of a staff professional development program will move the University toward the goals of 1) enhancing workplace conditions to recruit, retain and reward UW employees, 2) encouraging innovation and commitment, and 3) providing and incentivizing participation in professional development that enhances employee skills. The program will also help to establish a culture of growth among staff employees and enhance the efficient and effective functioning of the University. The Staff Senate looks forward to working with UW administration to establish this program.

¹ See [Goal 4: A High-Performing University](#) at uwyo.edu

² See [The Impact of Professional Development](#), Better Buys

³ See [Sustaining Employee Engagement](#), Society for Human Resource Management

⁴ See [Engagement at Work](#), Gallup.com

⁵ See [Employee Engagement Does More than Boost Productivity](#), Harvard Business Review