

Sentara College of Health Sciences

Creating a Healthy Workplace Environment for Academic Faculty and Staff

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Background

Each year Sentara Healthcare asks employees to complete a Members of the Team Survey to provide leaders and staff with an indication of satisfaction with leadership, resources, and coworkers. In 2016 the Workplace Environment Index completed by faculty and staff at the Sentara College of Health Sciences was 78.9% which was very acceptable, but significantly lower than 2015 score of 86.2%. In the 2016 Great Colleges Survey scores were 74% which indicated good, but were lower than the benchmark of 82%. These downward trends were a concern to leadership. It was decided that Focus Groups would be held to identify the needs of the faculty and staff.

Design

Focus groups, Round 1

Participants were purposely placed into 3 groups based on their department. Program directors served as moderators and scribes recorded what was said by each participant. Questions used in Round 1 were taken from Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Focus Group Discussion Guide (2010-2017).

1. What are some positive aspects of working at the College?
2. What are some things that are not so good about the College as a place to work?
3. What factors do you think may contribute to employees leaving or consider leaving the College?
4. What factors do you think may contribute to employees remaining at the College?
5. What would keep you in this job longer?
6. What suggestions do you have to improve the work environment here?

Themes

Themes that emerged from using the constant comparison method by members of the Academic Affairs Leadership Team were:

- Communication
- Autonomy
- Workloads
- Change
- Leadership and Management

The leadership team read "My Way or the Highway" (Chambers, 2004). This self-reflection led to development of an action plan to address some of the communication, autonomy, and workload concerns of the faculty. This action plan was shared with faculty and staff upon faculty return in August.

Action Plan

Action Plan Development, Round 2

• Groups were reconfigured into smaller groups and moderated by members of the Academic Affairs Leadership Team

• Groups were tasked to develop college-wide action plans related to the top 3 themes; communication, autonomy, and workload.

• The CUP model (Chambers, 2004) was used to assist in determining if the strategies in the 3 areas were controllable, uncontrollable or partially controllable.

• Faculty and staff spent another day with the Academic Affairs Leadership Team to present group plans and discuss the strategies identified by the small groups.

• The action plans were consolidated and organized with strategies prioritized.

• Level II action plans, with strategies to improve communication and autonomy, were presented to college leadership and approved for implementation in 2018.

Implications

Sentara Members of the Team Survey was revised by the healthcare system in 2017. There is no longer a Workplace Environmental Index instead, an Engagement Index is used as the indicator of employee engagement. August 2017 results: Engagement index of 5.27, which is at the 56th percentile; 44.4% engaged, 50% content, 2.8% ambivalent, and 2.8% disengaged.

Faculty only (n=23): Engagement index 5.43, 71st percentile, with 52.6% engaged and 47.4% content

Staff only (n=14): Engagement index 4.98, 23rd percentile, with 25% engaged, 58.3% content, 8.3% ambivalent, and 8.3% disengaged.

Next Steps

- Faculty and staff will self-select action plan groups and begin to work on the action plans, for implementation over the 2018 calendar year.
- Employee engagement survey will be distributed in August 2018.
- Great Colleges Survey will be distributed in March 2018.

References

Chambers, H. E. (2004). *My way or the highway: The micromanagement survival guide*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Inc. (2010-2017). Focus group discussion guide. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwj9ism6xY7XAhVHzlQKHW5NDIcQFggmMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.wcasa.org%2Ffile_open.php%3Fid%3D1039&usg=AOvVaw1v6ipXfrzpgwTPy7IJskPW