August 11, 2023

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| **To** | Michael Harwood, Campus Planning and Facilities Management |
| **From** | Brendan Adamczyk, Institute for Policy Research and Engagement |
| **SUBJECT** | **quest for the best session EIGHT summary: August 3, 2:00 – 3:30 PM** |
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On August 3, 2023, from 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Institute for Policy Research and Engagement (IPRE) team members conducted the eighth of nine focus groups with 8 CPFM staff members. CPFM and IPRE leadership began the session by sharing project objectives, agenda, and ground rules. Participants were then divided into two small groups representing a mix of departments. Within each group, IPRE team members moderated a discussion to respond to three questions:

* What should CPFM continue doing?
* What should CPFM stop doing?
* What should CPFM start doing?

# Each small group identified top themes from each of the three questions to report out to the larger group. Finally, participants voted on their top “theme” from each question. This memo summarizes the top themes from the focus group. Appendix I presents the results of the dot voting process; Appendix II includes the small group discussion notes and themes.

# Key Themes

Participants in this session identified very similar themes across both groups. The sections below provide the highlights of their comments, including support for the uniform requirements, a dislike of the pay structure and parking system, and a request for more training opportunities and retaining of institutional knowledge. These themes received the most votes in the dot voting section of the session; the remaining themes are listed afterward.

**Note:** This focus group was significantly smaller than the other sessions as most of the invited employees did not attend, so IPRE decided to place attendees in two groups instead of the normal three groups. The feedback for this session is therefore somewhat limited, but still relevant to the overall Quest for the Best process.

## What should CPFM continue doing?

Requiring uniforms and radios: Several employees expressed appreciation for the new dress code, noting that it makes CPFM appear more professional and increases visibility to the campus community. Having facilities or custodial staff wear uniforms also makes it easier for staff and faculty to identify CPFM employees versus non-CPFM contractors.

## What should CPFM stop doing?

* **Making employees pay for parking:** Attendees overwhelmingly expressed frustration with the current parking system, wishing that CPFM would take steps to reduce or eliminate these costs for staff.
* **Having low pay below the market rate:** Participants shared a strong desire for CPFM to raise pay to keep up with inflation and match the market rate offered by other employers, especially for roles in the trades.
* **Starting new projects before finishing old projects:** Several attendees, especially those in the trades, urged CPFM to prioritizing completing unfinished or lingering projects before starting new, expensive projects that divert staff time, energy, and budget.

## What should CPFM start doing?

* **Providing free parking for CPFM employees:** As noted above, attendees would like CPFM to consider providing free or reduced parking to CPFM employees, especially lower-level staff for whom the parking cost is prohibitively expensive.
* **Closing the wage gap between CPFM and other employers:** As noted above, many participants feel that CPFM’s below-market pay is limiting recruitment and retention and urge the division to take steps to increase pay.
* **Offering more cross-training and job shadowing:** Nearly every employee expressed support for increasing the amount of training available to staff to both share knowledge and resources and retain institutional knowledge in the event of an unexpected retirement or layoffs.
* **Increasing communication regarding the status of CPFM projects:** Several participants wished that CPFM would have clearer and more frequent communication about why certain projects have been delayed while others are moving forward, both for general understanding and safety (e.g., one staff member wanted to know whether the chemical eye wash station in a building had been repaired before returning to work).

## Additional Comments

The small groups identified several other top themes from their discussions distinct from the items listed in the previous section. A full list of all comments and the corresponding votes regarding these themes can be found in Appendix I.

# Appendix I. Dot Voting Results

## Continue

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Votes** |
| **Requiring uniforms and radios (increases visibility to the campus community).** | **1** |
| Social events (e.g., BBQ and birthday cakes). | 0 |
| Interacting with senior leadership. | 0 |
| Opportunities for employees to provide feedback. | 0 |
| The diverse range of social activities. | 0 |

## Stop

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Votes** |
| **Making employees pay for parking.** | **4** |
| **Having low pay below the market rate.** | **2** |
| **Starting new projects before finishing old projects.** | **1** |
| Maintaining unsafe parking spaces with Kubota machines in the CPFM parking lot. | 0 |
| Siloing departments and restricting collaboration. | 0 |
| Sending out repetitive surveys. | 0 |

## Start

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| --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Votes** |
| **Providing free parking for CPFM employees.** | **6** |
| **Closing the wage gap between CPFM and other employers.** | **5** |
| **Offering more cross-training and job shadowing to share knowledge and resources and retain institutional knowledge.** | **2** |
| **Increasing communication regarding the status of CPFM projects (e.g., why certain projects are delayed).** | **1** |
| Simplify the Gold Duck nomination process. | 0 |
| Develop succession plans to reduce the loss of institutional knowledge for retiring employees. | 0 |
| Offering more value for work experience over degree requirements and opportunities for job advancement. | 0 |

# Appendix II. Small Group Discussion Notes and Themes

## Small Group Notes: A

**The following section contains notes from one of the three small groups within this session.**

### What should CPFM keep doing?

* **Continue the diverse community events and activities.** The staff enjoy the semi-frequent community gatherings, such as the picnics and bowling parties, and they particularly appreciate the effort on upper management’s part to offer a diverse range of event types.
* **Continue offering opportunities for employee feedback.** While there remains some skepticism around the efficacy of Quest for the Best, participants appreciate the effort to gather feedback.

*\*This group only had two items for the “continue” category.*

### What should CPFM stop doing?

* **Stop excessive community surveys.** Participants feel that CPFM, alongside the broader UO campus, disseminate too many employee surveys (e.g., Quest for the Best, UO Climate Survey) without noticeable improvements. Staff would also like to see the survey process become more transparent.
* **Stop offering below-market pay scales.** CPFM employees feel that they do not receive competitive wages, especially compared to their private-sector equivalents. They feel undervalued and believe that low pay contributes to poor retention and understaffing issues.
* **Stop siloed, disconnected departments within CPFM.** Individual departments lack unity, cohesion, and collaboration, sometimes fostering an “us versus them” mentality among staff from separate units. A more unified workforce would create a healthier work environment and would also encourage knowledge-sharing among staff members.

### What should CPFM start doing?

* **Start providing free parking for all employees.** Staff should not have to pay to park on-site during working hours.
* **Start enabling a job-shadowing practice to ensure that knowledge is passed down.** A considerable wealth of institutional knowledge, such as the specific workings of various campus facilities and equipment, are not well-recorded within CPFM; this knowledge is often lost whenever a long-time employee retires. Allowing younger-generation employees to shadow experienced veterans would ensure that this knowledge is preserved.
* **Start valuing job experience and start offering opportunities for career advancement.** Many employees feel that they have been unduly passed over for a job opportunity merely because they lacked a college degree, despite extensive practical experience in their field. Offering further opportunities for vocational trainings within (or facilitated by) CPFM would allow for upward mobility and career progression.
* **Start paying employees competitive wages.** Close the wage gap that exists between public- and private-sector tradespeople and use higher wages to attract skilled workers. Over time, these practices will prevent burnout and provide performance incentives for CPFM staff.

### Additional Comments

This group was quite small (just four participants). Wages were (justifiably) a hot topic and therefore made it into both the “stop” and “start” categories. The group was engaged and had a productive, mostly constructive discussion.

### Discussion Notes

### What improvements have you noticed since 2019/since you started at CPFM?

* The group was having trouble coming up with ideas. We had a mix of people – one person has worked here for 30 years and retires next month; another person has been here for just a year or so. Very small group (just four participants).
* One respondent: Design and Construction Leadership has been more engaged with solving departmental issues. Action and follow-through after employee feedback is given occurs much more frequently now.
* One respondent: “Good insurance, I like the people, good hours, close to home” 🡪 this person says these are the reasons why he stays with CPFM (has worked here for 12 years), despite low pay and a sense that the Quest for the Best won’t be effective – doesn’t believe that changes/recommendations will actually be implemented
  + Another person echoed this – good hours, bad pay

### Continue – What should CPFM keep doing?

* Community gatherings and events 🡪 more diversity in events (i.e., not *just* bowling, but other activities)
* Staying in one office; not moving around between offices/office buildings (in the past, one employee has moved office locations a lot)
* These Quest for the Best focus groups 🡪 they are helpful (so continue them), \*\**but* there’s a sense that the University as a whole does so many surveys – could do a better job of consolidating and strategizing these community surveys so that it doesn’t feel like a repetitive or time-inefficient process [so this turned into a “stop” item – stop doing excessive surveys]
  + Belief that this QftB process is done to look good to superiors, but won’t actually implement change
  + Have seen Mike H. hold up that piece of paper with the 66 recommendations, but haven’t actually *seen* the recommendations (air of skepticism)
* Prioritization of safety; safety regulations
* Training and onboarding (esp. re: safety trainings)

### Stop – What should CPFM stop doing?

* Burn-out
  + Employees are overworked and underpaid
  + Lack of capacity for veteran employees to train new employees 🡪 subsequent under-skilled newbies cause overall inefficiency and burnout for everyone
  + Hiring more employees overall would reduce burnout
* Hiring people based on higher education degrees vs more practical qualifications (like job experience)
  + Hiring folks with degrees despite a lack of formal training, rather than industry-specific training and lived experience (even if they don’t have a degree)
* Stop implementing “improvement processes” without ensuring employee transparency
  + Want more agency and control in the improvement process
  + Valuing employee’s experiences; allowing them to have control over their work
* **Units and departments are siloed – lack of unity, cohesion, collaboration**
  + Sometimes an “us vs them” mentality, even though all staff should be working together
  + Lack of shared knowledge pool because staff aren’t integrated 🡪 loss of potential for staff to serve as a mutual source of knowledge and advice
  + Loss of camaraderie
* Stop letting staff pay for their parking

### Start – What should CPFM start doing?

* Closing the wage gap, paying market rate wages!
  + Employees are working alongside private contractors who receive more pay for the same work
  + One employee has worked here for thirty years with negligible pay raises
  + Low wages driving employees out of CPFM; employment scarcity
  + Higher wages would ensure retention and attract skilled, young workers
* Preparing employees better for retirement
  + Financial education and financial management training for employees
  + Communicating benefits information, etc. to employees more effectively (so that they’re aware of their benefits)
  + Used to have a pension program, which made jobs more competitive; the loss of this has caused a loss of employee commitment, job desirability, burnout
* Share feedback collection (surveys, QftB results, etc.) with employees so that they feel informed and included in process
* Recording more **institutional knowledge**
  + E.g. institution-specific facilities knowledge that long-time employees have gained -- that knowledge is lost when employees leave or retire
    - Locations of valves, circuitry, etc. etc. – all the tiny details of facilities and how the campus functions
  + Paying better wages would ensure better retention
  + Being more prepared for when employees quit/retire – anticipating their loss of knowledge
  + Shadowing employees to track campus-specific knowledge and pass it on
  + Time- and resource-inefficient
  + Existing employees often struggle to find time to train younger employees
* Issue of constant reorganization 🡪 shifting the org chart, changing job descriptions and titles 🡪 rather than addressing underlying issues
* Hiring process taking “attitude over aptitude” 🡪 sense that university is not hiring based on needed talent/skill 🡪 need for more skilled workers
* Incentive programs for employee innovation and hard work
* Allowing employees to make decisions that enable them to streamline and improve their own work (**agency)**
* Anticipating the eventual loss of key institution personnel (long-time employees who bring a lot of value – how will that value be replaced?)
* Preserving key information for operating equipment/machinery
  + Specific details of how to operate that machinery are often passed around internally/informally, but not preserved formally as instruction manuals within CPFM/University
  + Stop not digitizing instruction manuals and preserving this info

### Top 3 Identification

**CONTINUE**

* Diversity of events/gathering across CPFM
* Opportunities for employees to provide feedback

**STOP**

* Below-market, uncompetitive pay scales
* Siloed, disconnected departments
  + Allow for interaction, collaboration, integration
* So many repetitive surveys

**START**

* Free employee parking
* Shadowing experienced employees to ensure retention of institutional knowledge
* More value for work experience and opportunities for advancement (e.g. training)
* Closing the wage gap with private-sector employees; offering a competitive wage

## Small Group Notes: B

**The following section contains notes from one of the three small groups within this session.**

### What should CPFM keep doing?

* Continue interactions and contact with higher-up leadership. Employees appreciated being also to meet with leadership a several times a year and having an open conversation rather than being talked to.
* Continue social events such as barbeques and monthly birthdays to be able to interact with other staff members. Some suggested more diversity in these kinds of events and more accessible scheduling.
* Continue providing uniforms. Employees stated that it made those that interact with people on campus feel more professional and also was an identifier to the community. People have been more willing to come up to them and ask questions.

### What should CPFM stop doing?

* Stop making employees pay for parking. Paying for parking was widely agreed on and felt unfair that not everyone (those who worked after 6) didn’t have to pay. Some suggested having designated CPFM staff parking as well, rather than zone parking.
* Stop having the Kubota service vehicles park outside of the CPFM building. They are parked outside of the main entrance and are a safety hazard when backing up and moving in/out. Perhaps have a different designated space for them to be parked, safely.
* Stop starting new projects before finishing already started ones. Wrapping up long term plans doesn’t seem to always happen, leaving employees struggling to find what they need and leading to a lack of consistency and organization. Things such as building plans are often inaccessible and can result in dangerous situations. A lack of storage space is an issue but also there is no streamlined organization and way to track items.

### What should CPFM start doing?

* Start developing succession plans and increase cross-training and job shadowing where possible to better pass down institutional knowledge. Share knowledge and resources (such as keys and other building-specific information). Staggering shadowing and training can lead to more efficient learning and training.
* Start increased communication regarding project statuses and project updates. For issues that regard specific units, they feel as if they don’t know what’s happening or if progress is being made at all. For project updates, if little to no progress is being made, explain why that is would be appreciated.
* Start rethinking and streamlining the Golden Duck Awards. The process to nominate someone is a clunky and inefficient process, creating a large barrier to people being nominated for and receiving awards. Hard work is not recognized as much as it should be and staff would like more recognition for their own and their peers’ work.

### Additional Comments

Additional things that were brought up but were seen as “never going to happen” were things such as pay increases and more incentives to stay in jobs**. One employee mentioned that in their 2 years working at CPFM, they have had 5 different bosses.** Some more general themes included wanting more respect for their jobs and opinions. As they know how to do their jobs best, it’s worth asking how they think things should be organized. On this same point, reviewing the permissions that employees have to buildings, H drives, keys, etc. could be important to make sure they have everything they need to do their jobs and not have to ask for simple things like building access and keys. They felt as if they were an afterthought rather than a priority when it came to these things. This same theme of a lack of respect and authority in the spaces they work has shown up in several groups.

### Discussion Notes

### What improvements have you noticed since 2019/since you started at CPFM?

* **More interactions and contact with higher-up leadership**
  + **Committed to meeting with different units several times a year**
  + **Open the floor instead of talking the whole time**
* Managements is more flexible with work schedules
  + Remote days, more flexibility
* Enjoyed being able to have shift overlaps with custodial staff in CPFM building to see custodian staff

### Continue – What should CPFM keep doing?

* **Having a uniform and radio makes them feel more professional at work and also be an identifier to the community, people are more willing to come up to them and ask questions**
  + Help them be more visible in the community
* **Have more events (barbeques) to be able to meet more people**
  + **Monthly birthday cakes**
  + **Maybe some more variety would be appreciated, consideration for different shifts**
* Golden duck award
  + Adjustments need to be made
  + Not seen

### Stop – What should CPFM stop doing?

* **Stop making them pay for parking**
  + **Those that are on swing shift don’t have to pay**
* **Alternate parking for Kubuota outside of CPFM building**
* Lack of storage for equipment on CPFM area and on campus
  + Not streamlined organization for storing materials and tools
  + Things that they ordered are nowhere to be found, no one keeping track of the items that are being stored (inventory)
* **Stop starting new projects before old projects are finished**
  + **Long term plans are not always finished all the way**
  + **Including organization**
* Plans for a building are difficult to find; scanned online and not accessible (plumbing).
  + Organizations for the H drive that they are stored on has no organization and very difficult to find the plans they need
  + For older buildings and new buildings
  + Safety issue and is dangerous when things are not labeled
  + Issue of passing down institutional knowledge
* Lack of information, not access to buildings
* Stop gatekeeping privileges
  + Review the permissions that employees have to buildings, H drives, keys,

### Start – What should CPFM start doing?

* Redesign or rebuild CPFM compound
* Shadowing a custodian that is currently assigned to a building, even little things make a big difference; stagger when people shadow and changed buildings
* Create a dedicated webpage for Golden Duck
  + A form for nominating people
  + Make more streamlined and user friendly
  + More liberal with awards perhaps
* Finishing plans before you start new ones. Start to complete plans and tasks. Start to prioritize certain tasks rather then saying everything is a priority
  + Difficult when things are halfway done or not consistent
* Addressing understaffing - Increase pay to incentivize them to stay (retention)
* Higher visibility nametags
  + Especially for custodians
* Start getting more follow-up on things
  + Regular updates on how the project is going
  + “This is what’s going on, these are the reasons that it's not happening” – Improved communication of project progress, updates on situations that affect the department and their staff
* **Start developing succession plans and cross training**
* **Cross-train (job shadowing) where possible**
  + **Share knowledge and resources (keys)**
  + **Better communication with project updates**
* **Simplify the Golden Duck awards**
  + **Rethink award system**