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| **To** | Michael Harwood, Campus Planning and Facilities Management |
| **From** | Leah Rausch, Institute for Policy Research and Engagement |
| **SUBJECT** | **quest for the best session one summary** |
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Campus Planning and Facilities Management (CPFM) wants to understand and enhance the experience and effectiveness of the approximately 300 employees within the Division—a project CPFM is calling “Quest for the Best.” The “Quest for the Best” seeks to identify key issues and strategies to improve the culture of collaboration and customer service at CPFM.

The Institute for Policy Research and Engagement team members conducted ten focus groups with Campus Planning and Facilities Management (CPFM) staff members. CPFM and IPRE leadership began the session by sharing project objectives, agenda, and ground rules. Participants were then divided into three small groups representing a mix of departments. Within each small group, IPRE team members moderated a discussion to respond to three questions:

* What should CPFM keep doing?
* What should CPFM start doing?
* What should CPFM stop 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 first session. Appendices I-IV provide full session notes.

# Key Themes

Participants identified several strengths and many opportunities for improvement within CPFM. For example, participants felt the organization should continue recent efforts to provide team building activities like bowling and softball outside of work. Participants also appreciated flexible work schedules and their open and supportive supervisors. CPFM can improve “top-down” communication efforts and work to gather more input on changes or project decision-making from within the organization. Participants overwhelmingly felt that changes were made without an end goal clearly identified. There was also broad consensus that there is a discouraging “us versus them” environment, especially with other campus divisions.

## What should CPFM keep doing?

* **Providing team building activities**: Participants in all three groups felt the recent team building activities were beneficial to the work environment. They allow employees to see each other outside of work and brings people together who might not otherwise meet or see each other. Participants also appreciated that activities accommodated all shifts and occurred with more frequency.
* **Offering flexible work schedules**: Table One participants voiced appreciation for ongoing schedule flexibility. One team member cited the availability of night shifts and the option to work four ten-hour shifts per week. Participants generally felt that supervisors are flexible with schedules and understanding when emergencies or unexpected life events occur.
* **Supporting excellent supervisors**: Many participants spoke to the quality of their direct supervisors, noting that these individuals have consistently been supportive, respectful, and have an open-door policy. Participants felt supervisors had their backs and would listen and act upon feedback when given.
* **Collaborating across departments**: Participants felt departments collaborated well within CPFM and appreciated opportunities to work together towards a common goal. One table cited recent power plant improvements and the success of the department collaborating to resolve issues on the site. Participants also noted some departments are stronger than others in providing structure and clarity for internal communication.

## What should CPFM start doing?

* **Improve top-down communication:** Participants requested more meetings with managers and supervisors regarding updates, planned changes in the department, and upcoming tasks. Participants felt leadership could be more transparent about why decisions are made and better communicate new procedures, expectations, and policies before changes are implemented. One participant mentioned that when a task is handed off, it is sometimes a “fire drill” needing immediate attention. Participants also discussed support for classified staff, specifically that staff feel that their comments are “brushed off” by management.
* **Prioritize employee involvement in decision-making:** Participants felt they were not adequately involved in significant decisions, especially those that affect them. Some noted they often don’t hear about changes being made until they happen. One employee mentioned receiving an email informing them of changes that directly impacted their team. The team did not have the opportunity to provide feedback on the decision and the transition timeline resulted in significant additional work. There is an opportunity to involve more people and demonstrate that leadership values all voices.
* **Encourage cross-training and job shadowing:** Participants valued existing training and cross-training opportunities but felt there were opportunities to expand offerings. Awareness of roles and responsibilities can affect relationships across the department. The ability to work with other teams through cross-training or job shadowing can provide more understanding across the department. Participants want to bolster their skills and access professional certifications to open the door for advancement and feel more capable and confident.
* **Improve the hiring process:** Some participants discussed the time intensive hiring process and the resulting effect on the pool of quality applicants. The timeline to hire is so long that quality candidates often find other jobs before the department can contact them about the position. While participants recognized that this was not specific to CPFM, but rather a campus-wide issue, it has a significant impact on CPFM. Another participant noted that several positions remain unfilled, even when funding exists. This is highly frustrating and affects the workload of existing staff members.

## What should CPFM stop doing?

* **Backtracking or making changes mid-project**: Participants perceived that management constantly change their mind about future plans. Participants expressed the need for management to make a decision with proper planning and input and stick to it. Constant changes cause animosity toward supervisors and some participants felt upper management is “playing chess” with employees. Effective implementation of a project plan may require more meetings and discussion, but the increased planning will result in more support. This contributed to a sense of “constant change” to policies and procedures that often feel sudden or unexpected. For example, a change to the custodial office cleaning schedule resulted in significant shifts in team structure but did not include appropriate opportunities for feedback prior to the change.
* **Promoting an “us versus them” culture**: Participants mentioned some conflict between teams, and felt the culture extended across campus – especially with the athletics and housing divisions. There is a feeling of separation from the rest of the University—that different units operate in silos (specifically, participants mentioned CPFM, housing, and athletics). One participant stated, “We work for university and for students, but we aren’t involved in the broader university.”
* **Offering “blanket” solutions to problems**: Participants noted that when an issue occurs within a team or department, the entire group is required to undergo training in response. Participants see this as ineffective and missing the source of the problem. If one person is in need of training, they should be the only one required to participate.
* **Overloading staff with too much work**: Participants observed managers as generally over-capacity. One person may be tasked with the responsibilities of three people due to staffing or funding issues. Although cross-training was also discussed in the session, participants do not want to see this used as a method to cover for open positions.

## Additional Comments

The view of ongoing changes at CPFM fell across a wide spectrum. One participant could not think of any practices to “keep” in CPFM because of the drastic changes that have already taken place. In contrast, another participant recognized that while there is a problem with a lack of communication about changes, they felt it was important for CPFM to continue to search for ways to keep learning, growing, and improving.

Participants also noted the desire to foster an environment where they can be proud of the work they do. Some are afraid that workflow and employee changes could affect this environment. Participants want to see their feedback taken seriously, with some noting direct feedback to managers “goes in one ear and out the other.” Group members advocated for some kind of acknowledgment that their words were considered. Some group members felt they often attend meetings where the administration is satisfying their own criteria and not actually listening to staff. They also expressed that when meetings do occur and people speak up, nothing ever comes from input and suggestions.

Other themes from small group discussions included:

* Increased and more serious union engagement
* Considering alternative fuel vehicles
* Increased employee pay and more innovative strategies for revenue generation
* Using standardized work tickets
* Placing more trust in those that are hired to do their work competently
* Referring to employees by name rather than position
* Being open to criticism without retaliation

# Appendix 1. Table 1 Notes

* **One word to describe your ideal work environment**
  + Communication
  + Relaxed
  + Stimulating/creative
  + Unity- communication
  + Flow
  + Respectful
  + Be creative
* **Continue – What should CPFM keep doing?**
  + Where we are at as a company there is zero. There have been too many changes.
  + being able to work four ten-hour shifts
  + participant likes night shift
  + team building activities- bowling. Gets people together
  + playing! Participant enjoys the activities that management sets up like bowling and kickball. Good to see coworkers outside of work. Referred to activities as paid playing
  + collaborating and working together toward common goals. An example of this is when the powerplant needed improvements, they collaborated with us to have conversation.
  + Excellent supervisors- participant cited that they are both wonderful to work for and that they are consistently excellent due to their respectfulness and the open-door policy.
  + Other supervisor comments include that supervisor is supportive and has my back. They listen and hear feedback that I provide.
  + Keep making changes. Keep growing. Keep learning. Change is hard and there is a lack of communication in the department to address, but hopefully at the end of all the changes, the department improves.
* **Start – What should CPFM start doing?**
* Employee involvement in bigger decisions and when changes are being made. There has been a lot of change over past few years. Often we don’t hear about it until the change is being made. Very Frustrating.
* Leah asked: Is there a time when this communication or involvement was done effectively? Participant- Not really.
* Team meetings used to occur once per month and provided information for the team. This is not happening any longer. Managers talk about updates infrequently.
* More Meetings, including 1:1. There is a need for more connectedness. We have meetings, but with increased changes maybe there need to be more specific topical meetings. Sometimes employees can be so embedded in day to day you might need manager or supervisor to tell you what is going on in the department.
* Better communication top down regarding planning and changes. Often when things are handed to you it’s a fire drill. It needs to be done right now, even though upper management may have known this was coming or needed for a while.
* An example is the office cleaning schedule. Went from weekly to monthly schedule and our team did not find out about change until email went out to entire university. On a custodial level that changes entire structure of our team. We have to reevaluate every single building. We didn’t have a chance for feedback before we had to start making the change.
* I had a week to move spaces. Clean, pack, and move.
* As coordinators, we need regular space to store and work with equipment. Broken equipment doesn’t have a space to work on it.
* There needs to be more transparency, advanced communication, and meetings
* Treat it like a reverse chain of command. Currently, they meet and it doesn’t come to us at an appropriate time. Needs to trickle down through the department via meetings using the hierarchy.
* Consider pay increase and funding initiatives. Don’t want to say we want more money, but the university needs to generate income to give pay increases. Asks how can the community come together? How do we (cpfm) get the (university) community involved?
* I don’t know why we start projects when we don’t know what money we have to pay for it. When you have a project you should reorganize it to fit your budget. Otherwise it causes problems for the employees who worked on it. An example is the bathroom renovation that didn’t have funding. They are beautiful Bathrooms, but there is no money to pay. Projects often have too long estimates and a short budget.
* Streamline hiring process through central HR. It currently takes too long. I personally missed out on quality candidates because it took so long they went somewhere else. Campus wide problem. Central HR is a black hole.
* In our department open positions remain unfilled even though the funds are there. Position is just being left open and it is very frustrating. This affects entire department and staff. The hiring process is so long already that when they haven’t even started the process you know It will take months to fill a position.
* Cross training important. We all have different jobs, but if you know what others do when you see each other
* Job shadowing? When you can work with others in the department and get an idea of what they do.
* Problems with car fueling. Maybe think electric. Want to move away from big gas.
* Be more supportive of classified staff. They feel unheard by mgmt. and that they are brushed over.
* More involvement in broader university. We work for university and for students, but we don’t go to or are involved in the broader university. Need a hang out with the students day!
* **Stop – What should CPFM stop doing?**
* Instead of individually clarifying a problem with an individual, they blanket problems to the entire team. It becomes everyone’s issue. If one person needs training they are training all of the people. Just train the one person.
* Overloading managers with too much work. Stop using one person to do 3 jobs.
* Cross training is great, but when you do that so they can pick up more load, it is too difficult. May be a funding problem?
* Stop making sweeping changes w/o prep and communication.
* More of a culture thing. People identify people as their classification or their position rather than their name. Rather than using their code or position, use their name. They are humans. When you use the position/title your mind goes to os2, what does that person get paid? It is gross.
* Stop making it us v them. For example, CPFM v housing. Even outside the dept. a lot of us v them rather than u of o as a whole.
* Stop changing plan w/o a finalized plan or change in mind. Decide and stick with it. Too much moving around and playing chess with the employees. Causes too much animosity. Finish the project and move forward.
* Addressing this might mean multiple meetings with people.
* Results of indecision is losing support of employees because decisions can’t be made.
* Instead of throwing spaghetti against wall until it sticks, use a thermometer to check temp. plan more.

# Appendix II. Table 2 Notes

* **One word** to describe your ideal work environment
  + Organization+++
  + Rewarding
  + Communication
  + Cooperative working as a team
  + Efficient (logical, organized)
* **Continue – What should CPFM keep doing?**
* Establishing clear channels of communication, if you are having an issue with something… you can go to your super, HR, etc. clear levels of how to handle grievance. Keeping that structure is a continue.
* Collecting input from employees and seeking feedback
* Team building activities
* Understanding supervisors, job flexibility
* Cross-crew team building – more time spent together would be better
* Collaborate – within our teams (design/construction) and with other teams around campus. We tend to walk down the hallway, and have face to face comms vs sending an email (unless we’re angry)
* Provide support organizationally (example: reaching out to HVAC, plumbers, utilities – supporting MEP)
* Stewardship – doing the right thing, for short term or long term. Making things ultimately better not worse.
* Communication and respect on the crew
* Flexibility and understanding between crews and supervisors.
* Picnics, park walks, social activities 1x month (more frequently more recently, and scheduled for all shifts)
* **Start – What should CPFM start doing?**
  + Be more time sensitive. Plan accordingly. Plan. Organize. Keep meetings to the time limit, and ensure that people have the time they were promised to get their tasks done. Stay on task. Get to the point.
  + Better communication between the students, the staff and me. Education and communication between CPFM and other parts of the campus, especially students.
  + More interaction with Campus – who is CPFM and what do we do? People don’t know who or what this org does. More appreciation for what CPFM does, and more understanding of what happens behind the scenes.
  + Even in CPFM, the crews are not familiar with what other crews do. Grounds, vs. custodial, vs construction.
  + Precise communication around policies, procedures and expectations. What are the expectations, what do you want me to do? When you are first hired, you are told some things, but things change, and changes are never communicated.

Conflicting messages.

* Work tickets – produced by “work control”. Standardize how the tickets are created and titled, make the tickets more descriptive and clearer. Consistent fields of detail.
* Filling vacancies and within a reasonable time frame. Often short-staffed.
* Include the right people at the right time. Keep all the appropriate departments involved in decision making.
* **Stop – What should CPFM stop doing?**
  + Micromanaging**.** Trust the people who are hired to do the job**.**
  + Constant change and overhauls to policies and procedures.

# Appendix III. Table 3 Notes

* **One word** to describe your ideal work environment
  + Productive: Proxy for enjoyment – shop specific
  + Equitable: Does not feel that CPFM is an equitable environment anymore, was at one point
  + Outside: Familiar Environment – not outside enough
  + Good
  + Unity: Able to get along – shop specific – share the workload
  + Pleasant: Need a quieter environment – low morale (group consensus)
* **Continue – What should CPFM keep doing?**
  + Activities together: summer parties, lunches, getting to know each other throughout campus. Go to Fern Ridge to play softball, bowling.
  + Opportunity to go out of campus an interact with each other in a non-work environment – different feel
  + Team building
  + Comradery
  + Turning jobs in to something personal
  + Continue to foster an environment where there is intrinsic value
  + Continue - potential for training
* **Start – What should CPFM start doing?**
  + More union engagement
  + More technical/professional training – specific training
  + Individually listen to the employees concerns and take it more seriously
  + Do not feel that employee’s concerns are going unheard
  + Cut administrative bloat in middle management - assistant/associate roles
  + Start tackling administrative bloat
  + Respond to brought up issue later – present critical thought and feedback
  + Hold meetings where all voices matter – actions are clearly taken
* **Stop – What should CPFM stop doing?**
  + Stop retaliatory attitudes
  + Stop people being punished from speaking out
  + Stop having meetings that could be resolved through emails
  + Mandatory meetings where not all opinions are regarded
  + Stop hiding information – more candid and transparent administrative decisions and knowledge of administrative goals

# Appendix IV. Dot Voting

* Continue
  + Team building exercises (12 votes)
  + Flexibility around schedules and work tasks (5 votes)
  + Good supervisors (3 votes)
  + More outside work engagement (1 vote)
  + Training opportunities (0 votes)
  + Supportive internal communication (0 votes)
* Start
  + Better top-down communication (8 votes)
  + Gather more input from within CPFM (6 votes)
  + Cut out the middlemen (2 votes)
  + Offer more training programs to increase mobility (2 votes)
  + Streamline the hiring process (2 votes)
  + Cross-departmental communication (0 votes)
  + Better external communication to campus (0 votes)
  + Improved clarity on expectations of roles and responsibilities (0 votes)
  + Involve employees in decision-making (0 votes)
  + Act upon feedback (0 votes)
* Stop
  + Making changes without all the pieces in place to do so effectively (10 votes)
  + Creating an “us vs. them” environment (6 votes)
  + Making changes without broad input (2 votes)
  + Overloading staff (1 vote)
  + Pointless meetings (1 vote)
  + Hiding information (1 vote)
  + Micromanaging – trust your staff (0 votes)
  + Retaliation against people who speak out (0 votes)