MEMORANDUM

To: Cindy Ingold, Library
            Beth Woodard, Library
FROM: Tiy Goddard and Sue Stewart, the Training Center
DATE: August 24, 2016
SUBJECT: Focus Group Overview and Suggestions for Follow-Up

As in most climate surveys across organizations and educational institutions, the ClimateQUAL: Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment survey was an opportunity for respondents to challenge the status quo. Saying that, ClimateQUAL results and focus group feedback are extremely positive. From the focus groups, it is apparent the participants care deeply for and are passionate about the Library; they want to provide constructive feedback as well as stay the course with current strengths, looking toward improvements where needed.

The three sections below are the focal trends that surfaced from feedback collection. They are: 1) building trust using open communication, 2) LibServ, and 3) committees. The last two, although mainly process driven, represent impactful opportunities to build trust.

Building Trust Using Open Communication

A series of studies conducted in the 1990s asked employees what they wanted from their jobs. The top two responses were: 1) full appreciation for work done and 2) being "in" on things.[1] The focus group feedback underscores the participants' desire to individually impact the betterment of the Library. They are anxious to be "in the know" at the Library, which translates to enhanced access to information and ways to provide feedback.

A few participants envision the Library as "one community." That term seems to sum up the overall feeling among the participants. They are looking for ways to connect to the Library with mechanisms that push their feedback to higher levels. Participants also have a high interest in contributing feedback before decisions are made; they clearly want to be heard.

Face-to-face communication with the various libraries, staff, and the Library as a whole is a prominent interest. Participants seek places to meet face-to-face on a casual and informal basis. They desire opportunities to learn more about each other and their jobs.

Advice on resolving conflict was mentioned. A need was expressed for a third party to assist the Library on how to approach conflict both among work colleagues and as committee members.

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[1] Nelson, Bob, and Dean Spitzer. *The 1001 Rewards & Recognition Fieldbook*. Workman Publishing, 2003, p. 18.

The list of questions below offer long- and short-term options to build trust through open communication.

Questions to Ponder

1. How can the Library build one "community" across all libraries and units?
2. Can the Library involve employees in decision making at any level?
3. What communication channels can employees access to provide feedback?
4. How can the Library foster more face-to-face communication in their departments and specifically all-employee events?
5. Where can employees go to receive assistance on resolving conflicts?
6. How can the library as a whole or within the various libraries recognize and reward employee achievements?
7. Should the Library invest in conflict resolution training for staff?

LibServ

Participants identified the LibServ as both a strength and a weakness. On one hand, it is the best and most reliable communication tool the Library has; however, it can be frustrating, some don't follow email basics and etiquette, messages can be inappropriate, and finding information if you missed a day has little or no recourse.

There was also a discussion on who manages the LibServ. The actual server is provided through Technology Services, but there is currently no Library unit responsible for its content.

As suggestions were being offered, it became apparent that improving LibServ could evolve into a lengthy process with several channels of approvals needed. Participants began thinking about solutions that could be implemented immediately. Some suggested that LibServ submissions should be the responsibility of the individual. Given overall guidance on the purpose of LibServ as well as tips on the most effective way to submit information, individuals can "police" themselves.

On a long-term basis, participants strongly feel that LibServ should have the capability to archive submissions. Currently, there aren't effective ways to retrieve cumulative information.

Some participants feel available communication vehicles are not being used due to lack of knowledge and training. Vehicles mentioned are Skype, Microsoft Outlook, and video meetings.

If there are no guidelines for submissions, there is a chance that the LibServ will not remain an effective communication tool over time. There is an intranet being developed that could take more personal traffic off LibServ.

Questions to Ponder
1. How can LibServ be improved without a lengthy approval process?
2. Who will manage content and format on LibServ?
3. Can individuals "police" themselves in submitting content and using correct formats?
4. What is the most effective way to share/train employees on LibServ etiquette?
5. Can all staff use the LibServ? Some didn't know if they had approvals to access.

Committees
Discussions on committees were similar to LibServ discussions. Some feel committees are very productive while others look at committees as either powerful or powerless, not representing all employee groups, and failing to share their end results for best practices.

Many are unfamiliar with the criteria on how to join a committee. Some Academic Professionals and Civil Service employees on committees perceive that their feedback is not valued by faculty.

Questions to Ponder
1. How can the Library bring more consistency to committees, such as levels of power, criteria for membership and dismissal, as well as collegial relationships within committees?
2. Who owns the committees overall?
3. What can be done to overcome the barriers between Faculty, Academic Professionals, and Civil Service staff?
4. Are there communication channels to document committee minutes or a short synopsis in a central location?

Training Center's Observations and Considerations
With employee desire to improve communication and become more informed employees, there are opportunities to launch grass roots efforts that could have significant impact on a short-term basis (six to nine months). Suggested short-term solutions/projects:

- **Building Trust Using Open Communication**

  o Employees perceive they have limited ways to provide feedback to upper administration. Is there a way to create or enhance a communication channel that is simple to use relying on minimal resources? The WebTools Surveys tool, SurveyMonkey, or other basic data collecting tools could suffice. When administration wants to gather feedback on a decision, program, or issue, surveys can be sent out. Employees answer questions; the data is easy to analyze and share.
  o Consider planning an annual event for face-to face communication among Library staff. A "job fair" format was suggested where departments/libraries would have tables and answer questions. Less labor intensive, a "mentoring" day was mentioned as a day for individuals to visit other departments/libraries.

- o Another possible grassroots approach is providing support and advice to faculty and supervisors on how to collect continuous feedback from their employees—individually or in groups.
- o Consider implementing a "self-service" mentoring system. The employee seeks out a mentor on their own. Employees would need guidance on how to choose a mentor, how to approach a mentor, setting parameters, etc. Mentoring can be one meeting, or it can evolve into a more long-term relationship. It can be job shadowing or assistance on a specific area of improvement.

- **LibServ**

  - o Consider assigning a committee (perhaps the implementation team that focuses on ClimateQUAL follow-up) to create a basic guide for usage of LibServ. Some employees don't understand its purpose, aren't sure they have the approvals to use it, and have no knowledge of the preferred etiquette.
  - o Consider determining ownership of the LibServ. It doesn't necessarily have to be someone from the Library's technical staff. The position could be someone who could answer questions and provide minimal advice.
  - o Consider offering more training on Skype for Business for communication across libraries, various meetings, and committee meetings. Promote and support further training on Microsoft Outlook and ensure as many employees as possible are using it.

- **Committees**

  - o Consider determining the owner(s) of committees to answer questions and referrals to the by-laws.
  - o Create goals, roles, and responsibilities for committee members.

Long-Term Suggestions

- Consider hiring someone who is specifically responsible for the internal marketing at the Library. This position can coordinate the employee feedback process and pass it onto administration. They can own the LibServ and the intranet. A part of their role can include implementation of face-to-face opportunities for employees. The goal of the position is to create one community at the Library.
- Consider creating a rewards and recognition program for employees. These programs must make credibility and fairness its top priorities. Programs can be created for the Library as a whole and/or within each library or department. They can be grassroots in nature as long as the process is clear and concise. Launching these programs is labor intensive. If there is a person with responsibility for internal marketing, this could fall within their responsibilities.
- Consider creating a way to segment employee populations to allow for more targeted communication across libraries and units.
- Consider reviewing the committee structure for clearer direction on goals, procedures to join and exit, etc.
- Consider creating a way to archive LibServ submissions.

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Focus on Management

Effective manager–employee relationships form the bedrock of building trust and leading change; managerial commitment and support is a critical success factor. Consider offering training to assist managers in understanding how they can enhance/initiate open communication in their areas, build trusting relationships with employees, and provide support for the Library's initiatives.

Consider options to bring conflict resolution techniques to managers. Effective conflict resolution paves the way for trust between manager and employee.

To implement this process, the Library can use facilitators internally and/or externally. Once a group has completed the program, some members may be selected to learn about the facilitation process and become program trainers themselves.

The Marketing Plan

The Library can create a marketing plan that works best for you. It can be straightforward or more formal. It should likely include your goals and objectives, strategy and tactics, action plans, budget, and timeline. The plan should be distributed to all staff. This process may lead you to assigning staff or committees to complete the tasks.

Closing Remarks

It has been a pleasure working with and meeting your staff. The feedback from ClimateQUAL and the focus groups provide rich insights into the Library's strengths and possible areas of improvement. It can be overwhelming to view all the suggestions and think about where to begin. The Training Center advises the Library move slowly toward its priorities, using current resources, and see success in stages. Employees do want to see quick movement, but steady progress will keep them motivated and demonstrate that this is only the beginning.

If the Training Center can be of further service, contact Sue Stewart at (217) 333-8342 or suestew@illinois.edu or Tiy Goddard at the above number or tiy@illinois.edu.