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President's Emerging Leaders Program

Dave Dorman, Coordinator

[200 Donhowe Building](#)

319 15th Avenue S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0106

612-626-0561
612-625-2574 (fax)

dorma001@umn.edu

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Staff Engagement in the University Community

Sponsors:

Victor Bloomfield, Associate Vice President, Office of Public Engagement
Carol Carrier, Vice President, Office of Human Resources

Project Overview

The University's mission, carried out on multiple campuses and throughout the state, is threefold: research and discovery, teaching and learning, and outreach and public service. These components of our mission are integrated in the concept of "engagement," recognizing that teaching and research are often most likely to be innovative and productive when they interact with important public issues.

The University not only interacts with a wide range of external publics; it is itself a significant community. The Twin Cities campus has a daily population of as much as 80,000 faculty, staff, and students, making it one of the largest communities in the state. As such, it confronts the full range of issues that face any major community — especially work-life issues such as transportation, communication, workplace design, environmental quality, and family and child care, etc. — but embedded in an institution for which learning and discovery provide the dominant ethos and in which shared governance is highly valued.

Initiatives that support and encourage engagement, such as those fostered by the Council on Public Engagement (COPE), have mainly focused on University interactions with external communities. More recently, the Student Engagement Initiative in the Office for Student Affairs began working on efforts to be more intentional in engaging students to develop skills of leadership and active citizenship within the University, so they may become more effective leaders and public problem-solvers for today and the future.

Staff (P&A, civil service, and bargaining unit) represent a large proportion of our University community, and have been major contributors to COPE. More work needs to be done to assess staff attitudes toward public engagement, best practices that might exist around staff engagement, and recommendations to increase staff engagement both inside and outside the University.

Objectives of the Project

This PEL project will investigate issues regarding staff engagement at the University of Minnesota. Both current staff engagement efforts and potential strategies for increasing future staff engagement will be explored. Specific strategic questions for this project include:

- What are the most effective ways to increase staff members' sense of the University as a community in which all members are collectively involved in issues important to the institution?
- What are the most effective ways to engage staff in meaningful outreach activities with the broader community in order for them to participate as more active citizens and representatives of the land grant institution of the state of Minnesota?

Specific PEL Tasks May Include

- Performing an audit of current staff engagement activities
- Conducting a literature search regarding successful staff engagement practices in large

bureaucratic organizations

Team Members

Michael Allen
Operations Supervisor
Facilities Management
612-625-7787
allen080@umn.edu

Coach: John Fossum

Asim Dorovic
Assistant To
Office of University Relations
612-624-0214
dorovic@umn.edu

Coach: Kay Thomas

Janet Kendra
Executive Secretary
Office of General Counsel
612-624-3591
kendr008@umn.edu

Coach: Deb Cran

Laureen Ross McCalib
Coordinator
President's Initiative on the Environment and Renewable Energy
612-624-9476
rossm025@umn.edu

Coach: Kathy Brown

Laura Negrini
Manager, Job Center
Office of Human Resources
612-626-1644
negri001@umn.edu

Coach: Elizabeth Eull

Mary Ellen Shaw
Counselor Advocate
Student Services - General College
612-625-4576
shawx001@umn.edu

Coach: Laura Koch