



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

2002-2003

Task Force Participants

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a learning institution, Carleton promotes a culture of continuous learning. It is in the College's best interest to tap the potential of its staff members through training and development. Staff training involves the acquiring and improving of job-related skills and knowledge. Professional development involves personal growth, preparation for promotion, and expansion of job duties.

A review of the *21st Century Committee Report* noted that little has been done in the area of staff development in the past five years. Vice President and Treasurer Barbara Johnson appointed the Exempt Staff Professional Development Task Force in the fall of 2002 to develop implementation recommendations to promote professional development for Carleton exempt staff.

The Professional Development Task Force, with significant input from exempt staff throughout the College and comparative data from peer institutions, has identified specific implementation recommendations:

- A strong professional development policy statement to support the recruitment, hiring, and retention of excellent staff.
- Adequate and equitable funding for professional development opportunities for staff.
- Institutional support for an expanded and accessible professional leave program, creating a cornerstone of professional development at Carleton.
- Develop a formal tuition reimbursement program.
- Use of best practices in orientation of new staff and continuous training for all staff.
- Mentoring and job exchange/shadowing programs for staff, promoted and supported by the Office of Human Resources.
- Continued support for an annual exempt staff retreat that fosters professional development and integrated institutional planning.

President Oden has described Carleton as being all about “the joy of the life of the mind.” Professional development is central to staff learning and growth. These recommendations, once implemented, will signal strong institutional support for continuous learning. They will ensure that the support is adequate, equitable across divisions and departments, and easily accessible. These professional development policies and practices will demonstrate that Carleton is as much a leader in the field of staff professional development as it is for faculty development.

The skills, knowledge, cooperation, and dedication of the College's staff are essential for the institution to function effectively. A survey we conducted on exempt professional development shows that this is not a topic that has received much attention in liberal arts colleges, and that Carleton's practices are fairly similar to those of our peers. The one area in which Carleton is clearly behind the curve is in tuition reimbursement policies (we have none). Implementing the recommendations included in this report will result in an outstanding professional development program, and will ensure that the College attracts, retains, and supports the best employees.

INTRODUCTION

The Exempt Staff Forum has been advocating for increased College attention to the topic of professional development for over two years. The Forum has held two annual retreats focused on professional development and organized several other formal and informal events to discuss this issue. They believe that paying more attention to staff development will strengthen Carleton's leadership in the liberal arts. These sentiments and priorities are consistent with the Carleton philosophy that "people are more important than things."

In 1998, the *21st Century Committee Report* recommended that the College "Intensify our commitment to staff and faculty development." The recommendation continued, "...Although we have an active professional development program, the College should take even stronger steps to ensure the continued professional growth of biweekly and exempt staff..."

In spring of 2002, after an exempt staff retreat on the subject of professional development, the Exempt Staff Forum submitted a set of recommendations on professional development for exempt staff in response to the *21st Century Committee Report*. Suggestions included ways Carleton might improve or make changes to current programs or develop new programs.

In September, 2002, Vice President and Treasurer Barbara L. Johnson invited a group of exempt staff to participate in a task force to take the next step in addressing professional development for exempt staff by developing a set of specific recommendations and an action plan for implementation.

Following is a summary of the Professional Development Task Force's goals and activities, recommendations, and implementation plan.

TASK FORCE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Professional Development Task Force (*see Appendix A*) were to:

- Analyze what Carleton is currently doing in relation to professional development.
- Study effective practices at other institutions and organizations.
- Develop a policy statement on professional development, outlining resources available at Carleton.
- Submit a report of the findings along with recommendations and an implementation plan to the Administrative Council.

TASK FORCE TIMELINE

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Following is a brief summary of the Professional Development Task Force activities and timeline:

Fall Term – A kick-off meeting was held with Barbara L. Johnson on November 22, 2002. At this meeting the Task Force developed strategies for gathering information and putting together an implementation plan. Members divided into three sub-teams to work on the various pieces of the project: 1) the Internal Look (what Carleton currently does for professional development), 2) the External Look (what other institutions and businesses offer), and 3) the Exempt Staff Retreat Suggestions.

Winter Term – The Internal Look sub-team met individually with members of Administrative Council to discuss their approaches to and perception of professional development at Carleton. A survey developed by the Internal Look sub-team was sent to 60 supervisors of exempt staff at Carleton. A survey developed by the External Look sub-team was sent to 116 colleges and universities (the HEDS Membership) and Fortune’s list of The 100 Best Companies to Work For (*see Appendix B*). The Exempt Staff Retreat Suggestions sub-team reviewed the minutes from the Exempt Staff Retreat and extracted those items important/helpful to the Task Force.

Spring Term - The Task Force collated and reviewed the survey data collected (*see Appendix C*) and then divided into teams to develop draft recommendations for specific topic areas. The Task Force also hosted two brown bag lunches for exempt staff to share draft recommendations and solicit input before finalizing these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT

Current Status:

The current Human Resources (HR) website contains a mission statement for their office: (http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/campus/human_resources):

“The goal of the Carleton College office of Human Resources is to foster an open work environment in which all employees feel welcomed, respected, and recognized for their contributions. Through a strong recruitment program, we seek a talented and competitive workforce that exemplifies diversity and teamwork. The HR office provides service in the areas of employment, compensation, labor and employee relations, management consultation, training, benefits and HR information management systems to all Carleton College employees. Our department is committed to the highest standards of service and is continuously seeking to improve in all of these areas. Our office seeks to provide support to all employees, as well as effective and efficient communication of Carleton College policies and procedures.”

HR does not currently provide an overall statement addressing professional development.

Recommendations:

- 1) *We recommend additional positive and supportive language for hiring, retaining and developing staff be included in the mission statement, distinguishing between the overall mission statement and the goals of the HR office itself. Proposed text follows:*

The goal of the Carleton College office of Human Resources is to foster an open work environment in which all employees feel welcomed, respected, and recognized for their contributions. The skills, cooperation and dedication of the College's staff are essential for the institution to function effectively. The Human Resources Department is committed to attracting, selecting, retaining and developing a talented and diverse workforce that maintains the College's high standards.

The HR office provides service in the areas of employment, compensation, labor and employee relations, management consultation, training, benefits and HR information management systems to all Carleton College employees. HR is committed to the highest standards of service and is continuously seeking to improve in all of these areas. HR seeks to provide support to all employees, as well as effective and efficient communication of Carleton College policies and procedures.

- 2) *Develop a policy statement supporting professional development. Based on best practices, we recommend the following:*

In the words of President Oden, “Carleton embodies the joy of the life of the mind.” As a learning institution, Carleton promotes a culture of continuous learning throughout the College. It is in the College’s best interest to tap the potential of its staff members through training and development. In this spirit, Carleton will assist employees by providing opportunities and encouragement for continuous training

and development. Staff training involves the acquiring and improving of job-related skills and knowledge. Staff development involves personal growth, preparation for promotion, and expansion of job duties.

2. STAFF HANDBOOK

Current Status:

The Staff Handbook has been revised and is available on the web at:
http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/campus/human_resources/hr_staff_handbook/.

Recommendation:

- 1) *Based on best practices, we recommend the following be included in the Training and Development section of the revised Staff Handbook:*
 - *Recognition of three levels of responsibility for professional development:*
 - a. *Individual*
 - b. *Departmental*
 - c. *Institutional*
 - *Annual performance evaluation that includes professional training and development objectives.*
 - *Acknowledgement of shared responsibility by the supervisor and staff member for the staff member's success in acquiring additional skills, taking on new and more responsible duties, and clearly identifying goals and new interests.*
 - *Encouragement to broaden staff members' educational background and training through learning activities inside and/or outside the institution.*
 - *A contact person to help exempt staff identify professional development resources, i.e., Carleton courses, higher degree programs, etc.*

3. FUNDS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Current Status:

There is a perception that funds for professional development are not equally accessible across departments. Staff are not clear about available sources of funds and access to them. The College currently supports in excess of \$225,000 worth of memberships and affiliations on an annual basis, many of which offer professional development opportunities through publications, workshops, and networking. Attempts to clarify the real dollars that relate directly to professional development are inconclusive as accounting practices vary widely across campus.

Recommendations:

- 1) *Clarify basic levels of financial support to appear in departmental budgets to support professional development and ensure equity among departments.*

- 2) *Establish a clear, consistent method of allocating and tracking funding for professional development across the College such as a combination of the following funding options:*
 - *Departmental funds allocated and administered in an equitable fashion.*
 - *Central funds administered by HR to which any staff member may apply for additional professional development funding to further individual professional development (separate from Professional Leave funds).*
 - *Professional development accounts for individual exempt staff.*
 - *A professional development endowment fund to be raised in the Capital Campaign.*
- 3) *Provide an annual report to exempt staff of professional development funding and strategies across the College.*

4. PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

Current Status:

Professional leaves of absence provide opportunities for growth and renewal in an institution that promotes continuous learning. Carleton's leave policy, while a valued benefit, is limited to two leaves per year and serves both exempt staff and adjunct faculty who number over 200 people. The level of departmental and institutional support for this program is unclear. Ambiguities in the policy and application procedure, a perception that the program is inflexible, difficulty in arranging alternate staffing, and the limited number of leaves granted all combine to discourage staff members from pursuing this professional development opportunity.

Recommendations:

The factors identified above that serve to discourage staff participation in professional leaves should be explicitly addressed in a written policy and in a program of promoting professional leave as a cornerstone of professional development at Carleton. The goal should be to make wide-spread participation in professional leave a part of the exempt staff culture at Carleton.

- 1) *Re-write the Professional Leave Policy to clarify the guidelines and application process to include (see Appendix D):*
 - *Increasing leave duration to up to one year in length and up to six months of pay.*
 - *Expanding the scope of activities appropriate to a professional leave.*
 - *Allowing leaves to be for nonconsecutive dates.*
 - *Allowing employees granted leaves to re-apply four years after most recent leave.*
 - *Removing the limit on the number of leaves granted per year.*
 - *Shortening the time frame between the time a proposal is submitted and the time the leave is taken.*
- 2) *Support divisions and departments in making professional leave a positive experience, not only for the individual taking the leave, but also for their department. Consider*

framing the adjusted workload as a professional development opportunity for other staff members, and compensating those staff members for their additional responsibilities. Encourage long-term staff to apply for professional leave, particularly those who would be unlikely to consider taking such a leave, as part of their career renewal at Carleton.

- 3) *Acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of those who take professional leaves including brief reports by participants at quarterly meetings; articles in C@C, Carleton Voice, Carletonian, newsletters, etc.; HR workshops on professional leave of absence; small group presentations.*

5. TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

Current Status:

Staff may enroll at no cost for credit or audit in up to three courses per year in regularly scheduled courses offered at Carleton. While some staff take Carleton courses for intellectual renewal, others enroll in courses at other institutions to meet their continuing educational and professional needs. Currently, tuition reimbursement is inconsistent and inequitable across departments.

Survey data collected from other colleges and universities show that 78% of colleges offer a tuition reimbursement program for employees, and 67% allow tuition reimbursement for general areas of study.

Recommendation:

- 1) *Institute a formal tuition reimbursement program applicable at any accredited institution for staff at Carleton administered through HR with the following guidelines:*
 - *Applicable to undergraduate or graduate courses.*
 - *Offers no eligibility waiting period for courses related to current employment.*
 - *Applicable to non-work related courses after two years of employment.*
 - *Applicable with a passing (“C”) grade or higher.*
 - *Allows for a benefit of 75% tuition reimbursement to employee.*

6. ORIENTATION

Current Status:

The current practice is for HR to meet with each new hire within 72 hours of employment. At this meeting they:

- Inform and enroll in benefits.
- Discuss handbook contents and performance appraisal process.
- Review handouts on domestic partners, SAC, telephone/voice mail, security annual report, Chaplain’s letter, Mentoring Program, Carleton in the 21st Century and the Campus Directory.

- Provide a brochure and show a video on Sexual Harassment and EAP program.

Recommendations:

- 1) *Implement in 2003-04 the expanded orientation program for exempt staff that was developed in 2001-02 by an Exempt Staff Forum Task Force.*
- 2) *Encourage HR, the Exempt Staff Forum, and the LTC to work together to develop an appropriate overlap between the orientation of faculty and exempt staff in order to develop a stronger sense of cohort connection between these two groups.*

7. IN-HOUSE TRAINING

Current Status:

HR conducts a series of training programs annually, including leadership training programs (currently on their website under training and staff development). This series of in-house training opportunities should continue, but should be informed by a more vigorous and imaginative assessment of staff needs and wants, and involvement of staff in determining the shape and substance of this program. ITS also provides a welcome series of workshops and classes for employees.

Recommendations:

HR should assume a leadership role in defining and implementing in-house training:

- 1) *Systematically survey staff on professional develop needs, including an annual survey.*
- 2) *Employ focus groups and use the annual Exempt Staff Retreat as methods of gaining staff input.*
- 3) *Develop methods of sharing and discussing with a broader range of staff the information they have about best practices in professional development and trends in in-house training programs.*
- 4) *Work with other departments on campus to explore the possibility of them providing in-house training opportunities. Consider coordinating with ITS and other departments, including joint posting on an HR web listing of training programs.*
- 5) *Work more closely with SAC and the Exempt Staff Forum Steering Committee to host sessions of interest to all staff. HR could also come to Steering Committee meetings a couple times a year to discuss offerings and gather ideas.*
- 6) *Implement an on-going professional development advisory task force.*

In these ways the existing HR training program may become even more responsive to staff needs. Exempt staff have specifically mentioned interest in programs on leadership, project management, and integrated planning.

8. MENTORING PROGRAM

Current Status:

HR informs each new exempt staff employee of the opportunity for mentoring. The mentoring program is currently operated by Paul Gaines, Associate Director of Multicultural Affairs, who oversees the program and assigns the mentors. This program began a year ago and is utilized primarily by employees new to the higher education environment.

Recommendations:

- 1) *Transfer responsibility for this program to HR.*
- 2) *Work with supervisors to encourage them to promote use of the mentoring program for new and/or interested employees.*
- 3) *Make funds available to support the program and incidental expenses, e.g., lunch gatherings, occasional social events.*

9. JOB EXCHANGE/SHADOWING

Current Status:

There is currently no formal program for job exchange or shadowing to enable staff to learn about or explore the work of other departments, similar positions at other organizations, or related opportunities for renewal.

Recommendation:

- 1) *Implement a Job Exchange program administered by HR to include:*
 - *Identifying several staff interested in job exchanges and working with them in 2003/04 on a pilot project to learn more about job exchange/shadowing.*
 - *Identifying and encouraging both in-house and other organizational settings for job exchanges.*
 - *The addition of a section in the Staff Handbook on Job Exchange to inform and encourage staff interested in exploring a job exchange or shadowing opportunity.*
 - *Job exchange as part of the Professional Development Leave program (if the exchange exceeds a few weeks). Include language in the Professional Leave Policy indicating that job exchange is one of the many options for leave available.*

10. EXEMPT STAFF RETREAT

Current Status:

The Exempt Staff Retreat, initiated by the Exempt Staff Forum two years ago, has been well-received by exempt staff as evidenced by the high number of exempt staff attending the retreat. The retreat provides an opportunity for inter-divisional conversations, professional development, integrated institutional planning, and the exchange of ideas and concepts.

Recommendations:

- 1) *Continue financial and institutional support for the Exempt Staff Forum and their annual retreat.*