



2017 Staff Development Survey Results

Systemwide Trends and Highlights

Minnesota State

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning opportunities are among the largest drivers of employee engagement and strong workplace culture. They are part of the entire employee value proposition, not merely a way to build skills. Learning is an essential tool for engaging employees, attracting and retaining top talent, and developing long-term leadership.

– Deloitte University Press, Global Human Capital Trends 2016

Background

During February 2017, Minnesota State conducted a survey to assess employee development needs of college and university staff and administrators. The overall response rate was 21% with a total of 1,393 surveys completed.

This was the sixth systemwide survey, which has been conducted every two to three years since 2005. This report highlights trends and opportunities for improvement.

For purposes of the survey, “staff development” was defined broadly. Examples provided in the instructions included training, professional development, online learning, and challenging job assignments.

Trends

- Although overall participation in staff development has remained steady, survey results illustrate a 9% increase in individuals who reported participating in four or more activities during the past year.
- Staff development participation in equity and inclusion-related activities has increased from 18% to 32% since 2014.
- Staff identified three major staff development areas to support their development and performance on the job. These areas were:
 - Job-specific skills training - 79% ranked it as very important
 - Individual coaching and mentoring - 47% ranked it as very important
 - Leadership development opportunities (challenging assignments, institution-wide or system-wide committee service, etc) – 44% ranked it as very important

Opportunities

- An opportunity exists to help staff understand the role that Equity and Inclusion play in their work in higher education. Almost 75% of respondents ranked this as an important or very important area of need for them to help them perform at their best.
- Individual coaching remains one of the most helpful activities for supervisors and non-supervisors alike. In addition, there is an increased level of interest in receiving coaching or mentoring and providing such opportunities would provide significant benefits.
- Results indicated inconsistency in the degree to which supervisors and managers are held accountable for their own development and that of their staff. The number of staff receiving performance reviews in the past 12 months has decreased, as has the number who reported having individual development plans. In addition, results pointed to a need for additional development resources to help supervisors and managers perform their roles.

INTRODUCTION

During February 2017, the Minnesota State system office human resources division conducted a survey to assess professional development needs of college and university staff and administrators. The Organizational Effectiveness Research Group (OERG) at Minnesota State University, Mankato provided survey administration. Staff of the Talent Management unit managed the project in cooperation with the Talent Management Steering Committee. This was the sixth survey, following previous surveys in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2012, and 2014.

The web-based survey began on February 6, 2017 and ended on March 3, 2017. Survey invitations were sent to 6,735 staff and administrators from 31 colleges and universities and the system office. Campus information technology staff assisted with security access and campus chief human resources officers assisted in marketing the survey and encouraging participation.

The overall response rate was 21% with a total of 1,393 surveys completed. Both the systemwide response rate and response rates at individual colleges and universities were lower than in past years. This may be a reflection of tightening data security, as well as time constraints for participants. The response rates are presented in Appendix I.

This is a report of opinions and self-reported needs of staff in three key areas:

- Staff development activities completed during the past year
- Perceived staff development needs
- Supervisory and institutional support for staff development, including completion of performance evaluations and use of individual development plans

This year's survey was modified to remove outdated items, enhance participant usability, and reflect the current landscape of professional development. For that reason, some items are not reflected in the previous year comparison report.

DEMOGRAPHICS

While there are slight variances among respondents from each institution, the demographics of the 2017 survey respondents were similar to past years and reflect demographics of the system overall.

- The following bargaining units and plans were represented among survey respondents: AFSCME, MAPE, MMA, MSUAASF, Commissioner's Plan, and the Administrator's Plan.
- The majority of respondents were from AFSCME (38%) and MAPE (31%).
- Women comprise 60% of employees surveyed and 73% of the respondents.
- Approximately 13% of employees surveyed belong to an underrepresented racial or ethnic group as compared to 11% of survey respondents.
- Over half the respondents have been employed by Minnesota State for fewer than 10 years, with 10% employed less than one year. About 25% have been employed by Minnesota State for 12-20 years, and 19% have been employed more than 20 years.

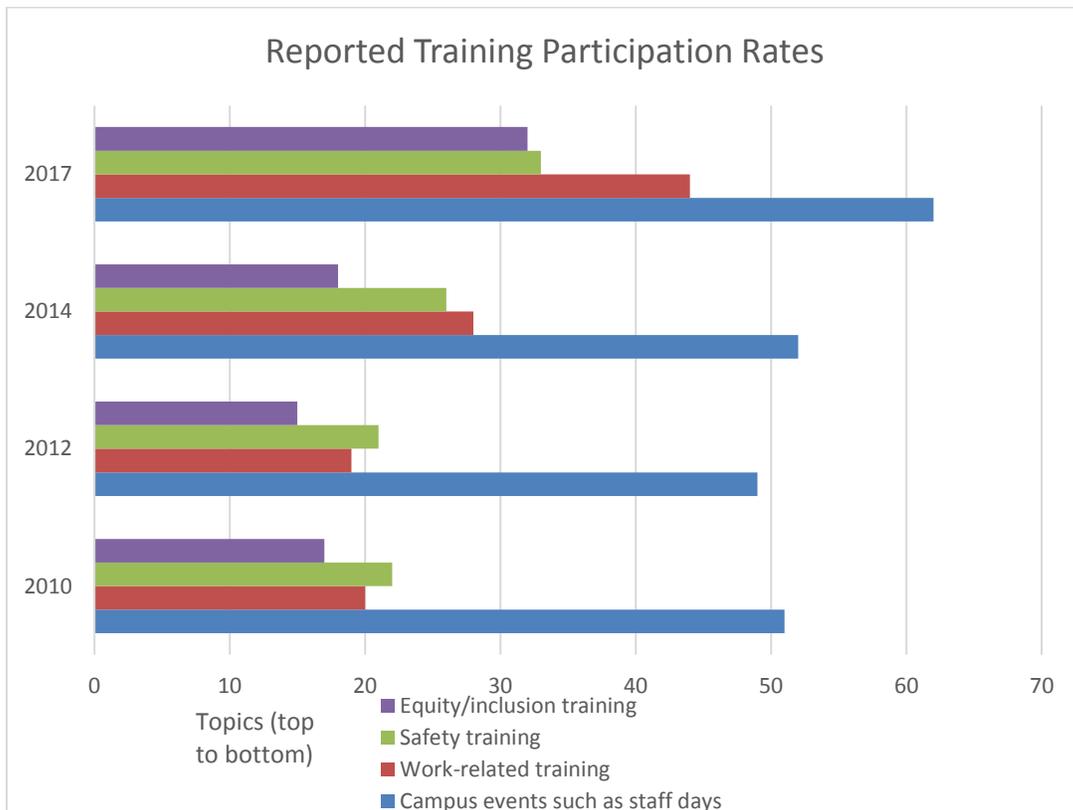
2017 SURVEY FINDINGS

Participation Trends

The survey was modified this year to include a consistent definition of staff development with examples such as training, professional development, online learning, and challenging job assignments. Reported participation rates remained steady, with 76% saying they took part in staff development through their campus or the system.

The majority of those who participated in staff development did so locally through their work unit (43%) and/or their campus (74%). By far the largest reported source for staff development was campus events such as staff development days (62%). Other trends include:

- Greater participation in staff development of all types, reflected in a 9% increase in individuals who reported participating in four or more activities during the past year (from 16% in 2014 to 25% in 2017).
- Steady growth in participation in equity and inclusion training, which almost doubled from 18% in 2014 to 32% in 2017.



Preferences for Professional Development

Of participants who participated in professional development during the past year, 74% reported that they participated in activities on their campus, such as orientations or staff development days. About 43% participated in work unit activities such as supervisor coaching or department-sponsored development. While 33% also participated in activities through the Minnesota State system office, these results highlight the importance of local professional development activities.

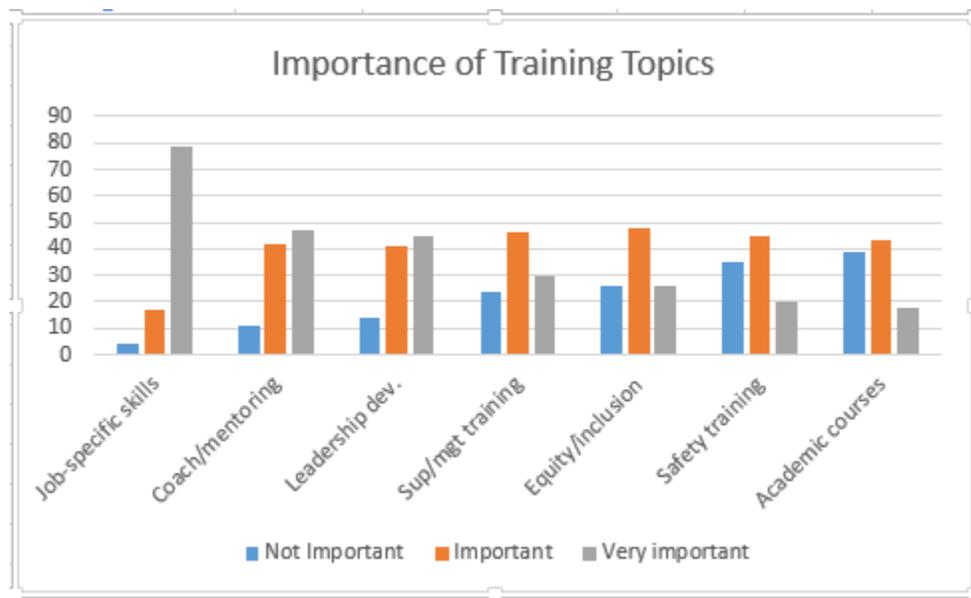
Respondents expressed a clear preference for in-person training that can be directly applied to their day-to-day jobs. As in past surveys, the preferred training method continues to be face-to-face workshops (66%). One-on-one training from a supervisor or peer and web-based self-study were each preferred by 13% of respondents.

In the open-ended comments, several participants expressed a preference for shorter development opportunities (half-day or less) rather than full-day professional development opportunities on their campuses.

Anticipated Development Needs

Staff members were asked, from their perspective, what was most important to support their professional development and help them perform at their best.

- Job-specific skills/knowledge training continued to be most critical.
- Individual coaching, feedback, and mentoring increased in importance, with 47% ranking it as very important, compared to 34% in 2014.
- About 75% of respondents ranked Equity and Inclusion training as important or very important.



The open-ended comments reflected a desire on the part of some respondents to apply professional development toward career growth. About a dozen people commented on institutional and system commitment to promote from within.

- *“It would be great to have the opportunity to grow within a department instead of having to look outside for another position.”*
- *“Ensure people who have strong potential within the college/system are supported with staff development opportunities.”*

A similar number of comments reflected a desire for succession planning and career paths.

- *“There is a need for progression planning in our department. Too many excellent employees have taken their knowledge with them when they left.”*
- *“Providing professional growth and clear career paths would greatly help.”*

Opportunities

Equity/Inclusion Training: This topic is included in the diversity work plan and strategic goals for most of our colleges and universities. Possibly reflecting this trend, reported participation almost doubled from 18% in 2014 to 32% in 2017. This comment highlighted its importance:

- *“We need opportunities that will help faculty and staff check and reflect on their own biases, create spaces on campus and in the classroom that are safe and inclusive. Although these are trying times for leaders, we are looking toward campus leadership to lead the charge.”*

While 26% of staff rated equity/inclusion training as very important for their professional development and almost half (48%) rated it as important, there is an opportunity to help staff better understand the role that Equity and Inclusion play in their work in higher education.

Individual Coaching, Feedback, and Mentoring: As noted above, 89% of staff rated it as important or very important. There were no significant differences in response rate between supervisors and non-supervisors, with almost half rating it as very important (48% of supervisors and 47% of non-supervisors). When asked about development during their first year, half of new supervisors (51%) said they received coaching from their supervisors and 42% sought advice from peers. The new supervisors rated these activities as most helpful, along with reading books.

Open-ended comments reflected an interest in mentoring to improve current skills and develop leadership abilities. Mentoring was also seen as helpful for orientation, but may happen on an informal basis. For example:

- *“I would love to see a mentoring program. New employees are thrown to the wolves. I have personally mentored several people and I was mentored as well but there is no formal program.”*

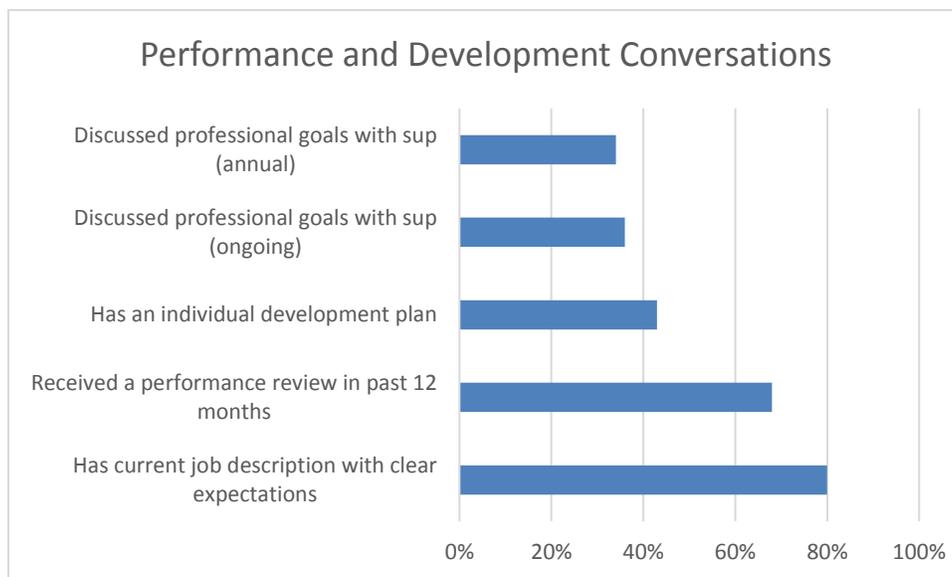
This level of interest indicates that developing more opportunities at the campus and system level would provide significant benefits.

Performance Reviews and Development Plans: 68% of respondents indicated that they received a performance review in the past 12 months, which is down from 72% in 2014 and similar to the 67% reported in 2012. There was a decrease in those who reported that they had an individual development plan (43% as compared to 51% in 2014 and 49% in 2012). There were 15 open-ended comments similar to this one:

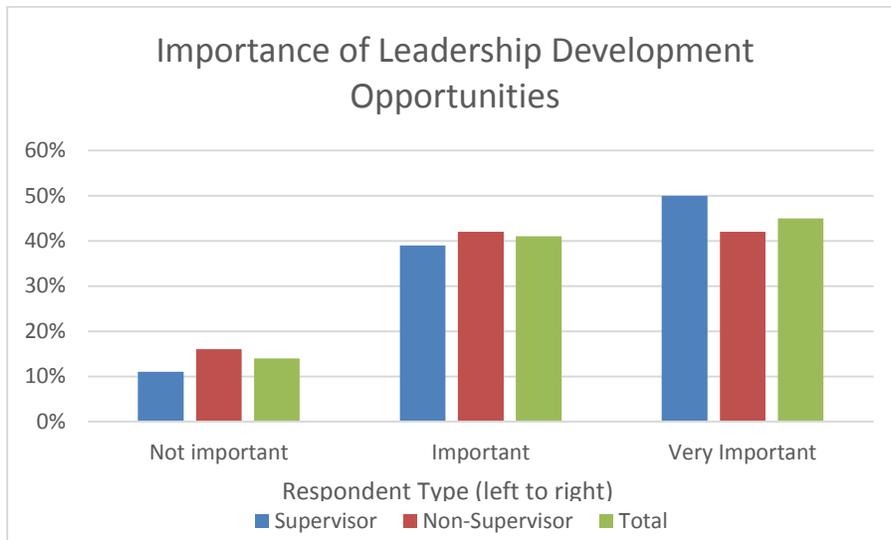
- *“It’s been over 3 years since I’ve had an evaluation and position description and they are greatly out of date. This has been highly frustrating and discouraging.”*

A new question was added this year and participants were asked whether they had discussed their professional development goals with their supervisors. There was an almost even split between those who hadn’t discussed it (31%), those who discussed it once a year (34%), and those who had ongoing conversations (35%). It would be reasonable to assume that those who had not received a performance review were the same individuals who had not discussed their development goals with their supervisors.

Given the importance of ongoing development as a driver of employee engagement and retention, there is an opportunity to ensure that all employees have at least annual development conversations and to increase the number who have ongoing conversations.



Leadership Development: Leadership development opportunities such as challenging assignments, institution-wide or system-wide committee service, etc. were important for both supervisors and non-supervisors. Overall, 45% rated it as very important, with 50% of supervisors and 42% of non-supervisors seeing this as very important to support their professional development and perform at their best.



In addition, 5% of the open-ended comments related to a need for ongoing supervisory training. For example:

- *“Focus your attention on supervisors, with less emphasis on teaching them how to enforce rules and more emphasis on teaching them how to demonstrate respect, understand the diversity of cultures and viewpoints on their teams, promote reflection, self-growth and self-direction and encourage collaboration.”*
- *Need more supervisory and management skills development system wide.*

Open-ended Comments

460 open-ended comments were received in 2017, compared to 385 in 2014. Some themes were similar with about 25% related to barriers to professional development, 16% related to job-specific training, and about 10% related to the tuition waiver policies.

Need for supervisory and institutional support. The number of comments related to the need for greater supervisory support for professional development almost doubled, from 10% in 2014 to 18% in 2017. A new theme related to institutional support, including comments about policies, processes, and perceived needs for institutional training. A significant number (27%) of the comments related to content, format, and frequency of staff development days.

Need for systemwide approach. Another new theme related to systemwide support for staff development. While it represented less than 5% of open-ended comments, it may indicate a new mindset of thinking about development at a broader system level. For example,

- *“We should be pushing staff development more as a system, and this should be included in our annual reviews.”*
- *“I appreciate the effort our HR office is putting in to do some supervisory training. I'd like to see some broader effort on a System level to help us network across institutions.”*
- *“One Stop Shop concept for employees to find training opportunities, suggested leadership reading, other development tools. Things are scattered and difficult to locate.”*

A summary of open-ended comments is included in Appendix I.

CONCLUSION

Results of the 2017 Staff Development Survey indicate that there have been improvements in some measures of staff development efforts across the system. Appendix II provides a review of the 2014 priorities and a status report.

Recommendations

New areas of opportunity are listed below. As the human resource delivery model moves toward transactional service centers, campus-based human resources staff will have additional capacity for needs assessment, developing goals, and implementing activities to increase employee engagement. The recommendations below may provide direction to these efforts.

Equity and Inclusion Training: According to a recent study of human resources trends, diversity and inclusion is being seen as a key strategy to increase employee engagement and organizational performance (Bourke, et. al.). Within Minnesota State, institutional diversity plans have been developed to address these issues. Action steps to support this work could include:

- Enhance partnerships among system-level units to develop resources for training on diversity and inclusion.
- Enhance partnerships among campus units to create and implement strategies that support fair and inclusive work climates for all faculty, students, and staff.

Individual Coaching, Feedback, and Mentoring: Given that 89% of staff rated this as important or very important for professional development and helping them perform at their best, this warrants additional attention from campus and systemwide HR staff. These activities may be particularly important in times of transition, such as beginning a new job or becoming a supervisor. Action steps could include:

- Talent Management Steering Committee could develop additional resources to help campuses develop peer mentoring or buddy systems for new employees.
- Talent Management staff could review training for new supervisors and new administrators and enhance content on coaching, feedback, and mentoring as needed.
- Campus human resources staff could identify needs and set campus goals for activities such as mentoring for new faculty members, buddy systems for new employees, or peer networks for supervisors.

Performance Reviews and Development Plans: Discussing development goals is known to promote employee satisfaction (Feld, 2011). About a third of respondents reported having ongoing development conversations with supervisors. Another third reported having annual conversations, which may be tied to annual performance reviews. The remaining third indicated they did not have development conversations with their supervisors. Action steps could include:

- Continue to monitor levels of performance review completion and set goals to increase levels where needed.
- Provide systemwide and campus-level training for supervisors on having effective professional development conversations.

Supervisory Accountability: Of respondents who supervise others, 63% indicated that they were likely to participate in supervisory/managerial development on an annual basis. About half (55%) indicated that their supervisors encouraged them to participate in these activities. About the same (54%) indicated that their workplace provided such opportunities. Given that these numbers have remained steady over past surveys, possible action steps include:

- Campus needs assessment and development or continuation of regular supervisory/managerial training on key issues
- Holding supervisors of supervisors accountable to ensure that supervisors and managers receive needed training to fulfill their roles

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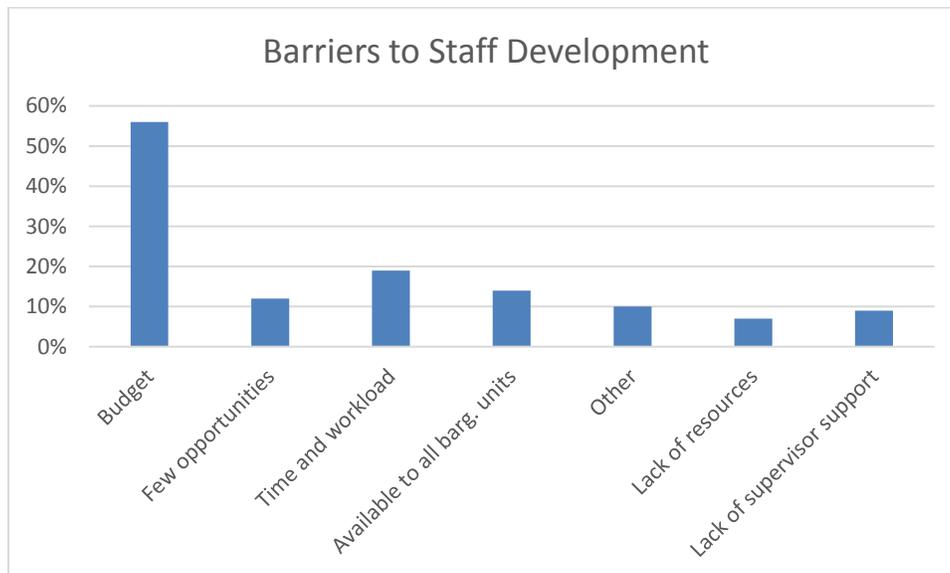
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APPENDIX I

Open-Ended Comments

Theme	Number	Percent
1. Barriers	121	26%
2. Institutional/system support	86	19%
3. Supervisory support	80	18%
4. Job-specific training	73	16%
5. Misc.	41	9%
6. Tuition waiver	39	8%
7. Comments about the survey itself	20	4%
Total:	460	100%

Barriers: Comments describing barriers to development were similar to past surveys. Funding/budget continues to be the most significant perceived barrier, at 56%. Other major barriers included workload (19%), perceived inequality across bargaining units (14%), and lack of opportunities (12%).



APPENDIX II

Response Rate by Institution

Institution Name	Employees Receiving Survey	Number Responded	Response Rate
Pine Technical and Community College	73	34	47%
Northland Community and Technical College	92	39	42%
Alexandria Technical and Community College	77	28	36%
Ridgewater College	135	48	36%
Minnesota State College Southeast	62	22	35%
St. Cloud Technical and Community College	124	44	35%
Central Lakes College	114	38	33%
Minnesota West Community and Technical College	94	31	33%
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	46	15	33%
Lake Superior College	126	39	31%
Minnesota State Community and Technical College	188	58	31%
South Central College	125	38	30%
Anoka Technical College	49	12	24%
Century College	264	63	24%
Anoka-Ramsey Community College	219	52	24%
Saint Paul College	155	35	23%
Riverland Community College	102	22	22%
Normandale Community College	243	52	21%
Northwest Technical College - Bemidji	26	5	19%
Inver Hills Community College	127	24	19%
Minneapolis Community and Technical College	268	49	18%
Rochester Community and Technical College	184	33	18%
North Hennepin Community College	157	27	17%
Dakota County Technical College	102	17	17%
Hennepin Technical College	191	31	16%
Northeast Higher Education District	228	27	12%
Colleges Total	3,571	861	24%
Minnesota State University Moorhead	316	61	19%
Winona State University	451	85	19%
Southwest Minnesota State University	174	32	18%
Metropolitan State University	296	54	18%
Bemidji State University	260	46	18%
Minnesota State University, Mankato	696	118	17%
St. Cloud State University	637	55	9%
Universities Total	2,830	451	16%
System Office	334	81	24%
Total	6,735	1393	21%

* Survey population includes all employees except faculty and staff who are temporary/part-time (less than .75 FTE).

APPENDIX III

Status of 2014 Recommendations

1. Job-specific training

- 2014 recommendations focused on sharing results with Chief Human Resources Officers and Charting the Future working groups in order to provide job-specific training opportunities and encourage supervisory support for skill development and practice.
- Accomplishments included:
 - Survey results were shared and incorporated into Charting the Future recommendations and HR workplans.
 - Succession Planning Toolkit was enhanced and campus-based pilot projects implemented to ensure training and development for critical positions.

2. Leadership training for non-supervisors

- 2014 recommendations focused on development of systemwide resources and strategies to provide training for individuals who lead the work of student employees and colleagues.
- Accomplishments included:
 - Development of systemwide Project Management training for individuals who lead projects or serve on project teams. Over 450 people were trained as of April 2017.
 - Development of online training and a guidebook for individuals who serve on search advisory committees.

3. Tuition waiver

- 2014 recommendations included sharing survey results with Charting the Future working groups and exploring options for different tuition waiver models.
- Results: The current tuition waiver model is included in labor contracts and changes would require collective bargaining. However, state of Minnesota allows the use of tuition reimbursement which could be a viable option in many situations. This information was reported to systemwide leadership teams.

4. Communication

- 2014 recommendations included creating online resources for new employees and working with Chief Human Resources Officers to encourage communication about local and regional opportunities.
- Accomplishments:
 - Onboarding Toolkit was created with resources to help new employees receive the information and training they need to be successful. (Available through HR Connect SharePoint site at <https://mnsu.sharepoint.com/sites/hr/>)