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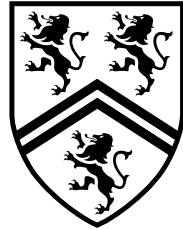# Waterloo

Final Report

of the

Task Force on Staff Issues

As part of the
Vision 2010 Planning Exercise

In the
Faculty of Engineering

October, 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Faculty of Engineering's Vision 2010 Planning Exercise, the Task Force On Staff Issues was established to determine the issues currently facing staff in the Faculty of Engineering and evaluate the impact of those issues.

Members of the task force included:
Chair: Bill Pudifin, Executive Assistant, DOE
Lynn Crema, Undergraduate Secretary, Mechanical Engineering
Tom Duever, Chair, Chemical Engineering
Rick Forgett, Technician, Engineering Machine Shop
Sue Gooding, Operations Manager, DOE
Valerie, Grieve, Administrative Assistant, Systems Design Engineering
Bill Ott, Lab Director, Electrical and Computer Engineering
Leo Rothenburg, Chair, Civil Engineering
Carol Smith, Administrative Assistant, Management Sciences
Dave Walsh, Technician, Engineering Computing

The committee obtained input from staff in all departments through meetings and written communications. Each issue was considered in terms of who was affected, level of costs, level of impact, and responsibility. Where possible, general recommendations are provided in terms of evaluation required, priority level, and course of action. Specific recommendations and courses of action will be determined as part of the overall Faculty strategic planning exercise and will likely require further review and analysis. It should be noted that many of the issues fall outside of the Faculty's control. Resolution of these issues will depend on support from various levels of the central administration.

Staff in the Faculty have taken this review very seriously and have made a great effort to contribute and be part of the review. The committee divided into teams of two and met with each department separately and in larger departments met with administrative and technical staff separately. It is estimated that 90% of staff attended these meetings. Initial meetings were held to hear staff concerns. Subsequently the committee distributed a summary of the information received and provided a copy to every staff member. The committee then held follow-up meetings, again with each department, to confirm the information collected by the committee and obtain staff reaction and comments on the completeness and accuracy of the information. The committee also received many comments directly from individual staff members.
As Chair, I would like to thank all the members of the committee and all staff members for their efforts. In particular, I would like to thank the Chairs of the Departments of Chemical and Civil Engineering, Tom Duever and Leo Rothenburg, for their excellent contribution and support of this process and their sincere concern for the issues that are affecting the staff in the Faculty.

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING
TASK FORCE ON STAFF ISSUES

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Staff in the Faculty of Engineering are very committed to their work and make a major contribution to the success of the Faculty and the University. However, there are presently several serious issues facing staff that relate to career matters, compensation and workloads which need to be addressed.

With the efforts of the university to expand in response to government initiatives and the development of new programs, staff workloads have increased and continue to increase. In both academic and academic support departments, the implementation of new computer systems and the ongoing upgrading of systems have also contributed significantly to staff workload. While action has been taken to hire additional faculty to accommodate increased activity and reduce faculty to student ratios, no similar action is being taken to ensure staff levels are commensurate with the increased activity. In fact the message is just the opposite, that there are no additional resources for staff and that academic support departments in particular will have to make do with what they have. This seems very short-sighted since inadequate staffing will undermine the operations of faculties, faculty researchers, etc and ultimately the goals of achieving and maintaining teaching and research excellence.

There are several aspects of the staff salary compensation process that have created frustration for staff. Combined with the current job classification/grade process it is possible that staff members will not receive the full authorized scale increase as a result of the annual staff performance review/salary increase process. Also, there is no process that will allow for staff salary increases other than those provided for in the annual salary increase process. Both of these situations exist at the same time that the University has made significant increases to faculty salary thresholds over and above the negotiated amounts and makes one time anomaly adjustments to individual faculty salaries on an ongoing basis.

Overall, staff do not have an effective voice in university affairs or at the Faculty level. There does not appear to be any body or persons that effectively speak for staff. The Staff Association request for a "Memorandum of Agreement" similar to faculty was turned down. Human Resources is not seen as working to assist staff in the areas of job classification, reclassification and advancement. This has resulted in an adverse working environment for staff in all areas.

Of the staff issues identified in the body of the report some are solely the responsibility of the Faculty, some are shared between the Faculty and the University and some are solely the responsibility of the University.

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING
TASK FORCE ON STAFF ISSUES

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS
I. CAREER DEVELOPMENT
1. Compensation
Faculty
-consider additional ways to reward staff for outstanding performance including annual awards at both the Faculty and department level
-review current job classifications and where justified initiate job reclassifications
-ensure starting salaries are at an appropriate level
University
-undertake a total review of the current staff compensation process
-provide for all staff to receive the full annual scale increase regardless of salary position in job grade
-allow for staff salary adjustments outside the annual merit process e.g. at the end of staff member's probationary period

2. Job Classifications/Reclassifications
Faculty
-review current job classifications and where justified initiate job reclassifications
-establish a process to enable staff members to initiate job reclassifications
University
-carry out an overall review of the job classification/reclassification process

3. Career Path
Faculty
-encourage departments to develop career paths where possible
University
-Human Resources to assist departments in developing career paths and provide job counselling to advise staff of possible areas for advancement

4. Training and Development
Faculty
- encourage and provide resources for staff training including a policy to guide departments
-consider mentoring, job shadowing, cross training, shared job duties and rotating tasks
University
-develop in-house training programs for university procedures and functions

5. Staff Representation/Support Resources
Faculty
-create a staff committee at the Faculty level to advise the Faculty on staff issues
-add staff representation to Engineering Faculty Council and appropriate committees of Council
University
-consider the need for more effective representation of staff at the university level

II WORK ENVIRONMENT

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING
TASK FORCE ON STAFF ISSUES

1. Workload

Faculty

-initiate a comprehensive review of staff workloads in the Faculty including ratios of staff to faculty, staff to students; amount of overtime, etc

University

-initiate a comprehensive review of staff workloads for academic support departments

2. Stress

Faculty

-encourage department managers and supervisors to monitor/be alert for staff stress etc

University

-collect and review data on frequency of stress leaves to determine trends in areas

3. Security and Safety

Faculty

-review security issues within the Faculty and take appropriate action

-convey environmental concerns to appropriate departments

4. Working Conditions

Faculty

-instruct departments to obtain feedback from staff on working conditions concerns and incorporate into department plans

III WORKING RELATIONS/COMMUNICATIONS – INTERNAL (to the Faculty)
1. Reporting Structure

Faculty

- instruct departments to work with staff in clarifying reporting structures and implementing changes as necessary

2. Communication

Faculty

-work to ensure all departments have an appropriate forum for staff to express views in department decision making

-initiate formal staff representation on the Engineering Faculty Council and appropriate Council committees

3. Conflict Resolution

Faculty

-provide information guidelines for conflict resolution taking into consideration University policies

IV WORKING RELATIONS/COMMUNICATIONS – EXTERNAL (to the Faculty)
1. Academic Support Departments

Faculty

-work with academic support departments to resolve mutual problems

<u>University</u>
-review staff complements and workloads in academic support departments

2. Communications
<u>University</u>
-improve communications on procedural changes that occur in academic support departments
-provide a general forum for university community to express views

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING
TASK FORCE ON STAFF ISSUES

I CAREER DEVELOPMENT
1. Compensation
There is a serious disconnect between the work value of staff members and the way staff are able to be rewarded through the existing salary compensation process. The current compensation system for staff is a not only a disincentive to employees but also contributes to inefficiencies in human resource management. As employees reach the midpoint of their job grade they are penalized by reduced salary increases. In some cases employees will get less than the full scale increase and no merit because they are above their midpoint in their job grade. While it is stated that staff receive the same scale increase as faculty this is not the case.

 New staff are hired at salaries that are below the midpoint in their job grade on the theory that they need to prove themselves before being entitled to a higher salary. However, once they are in the process they can only receive scale and merit according to the merit process. When they do perform at a level that would justify a higher salary than the merit system can produce, there is no mechanism to make that adjustment.

Similarly, managers have no flexibility to increase a staff member's compensation beyond what is determined through the annual merit process in order to reward good employees or provide additional compensation to retain good staff members.. This can create significant costs to departments, faculties and the university as a whole in terms of productivity, efficient use of human resources and morale. While staff members may be happy in their current position and doing an excellent job, the only way for them to increase their salaries beyond the merit process is to move to other positions in the university. For the sake of a relatively small percentage salary increase departments can lose good employees and the department and employee must go through the hiring process and a period of training and adjustment.

Recommendations
Any significant changes to the current compensation system will have to come at the University level. The Faculty should strive to establish additional ways to reward staff for outstanding performance. These could include annual awards at the departmental level and the Faculty level, bonuses, etc.

We should be hiring the best people possible and work to ensure starting salaries are commensurate with their experience and abilities. The process of starting employees at low levels until they prove themselves doesn't work since there is no mechanism to increase their salary when they reach that level . When employees become dissatisfied with the low level of compensation, they will look elsewhere to be employed and the department is back to filling the position.

The University needs to undertake a total review of the current staff compensation process. The issues that need to be addressed include:
-declining scale and merit increases for senior staff,
-lack of process to adjust staff salaries outside the annual merit process

-salary caps that are too low

Each staff member should receive, at minimum, the annual scale increase.

A process should exist where managers would have the ability to initiate salary increases outside of the annual merit review process, but within the employees existing salary range. Such increases would allow for hiring staff at a lower level salary until they prove themselves, retaining good staff members and reducing costs related to employee turnover.

Salary caps for staff should be raised overall as experienced staff reach their midpoints far too early in their career, resulting in minimal salary increases thereafter.

2. Job Classifications/Re-classifications
Staff see the current job classification and re-classification process as a stumbling block to career development. The process, including working with Human Resources, is generally considered difficult and frustrating. Both managers and staff perceive that this organization is not serving them well. No doubt it is trying to serve both constituents but the reality is that neither group is satisfied. The following are just some of the concerns identified:
-lack of guidance from Human Resources to aid in writing job descriptions and establishing initial job classification
-inordinate amount of time to process a job reclassification
-lack of transparency in how various levels are determined and applied
-overemphasis/lack of flexibility on university degree requirements when not always applicable to the job
-lack of consideration for "equivalent qualifications and experience"
-Human Resources evaluating jobs they have little or no knowledge about
-lack of USG consistency between jobs both inside and outside of Engineering

Some of the situations that frustrate staff include:
-changes in job qualifications, particularly the university degree requirement, which effectively eliminates their moving to jobs they are qualified for based on work experience
-being turned down for job re-classifications, subsequently moving to another job to gain promotion and then seeing their former job advertised at a level higher
-supervisors who aren't inclined to pursue reclassifications even when they may be justified.

It is felt that the current system may deter supervisors from initiating job reclassifications. Also, staff frustration with the current system contributes to job dissatisfaction and low staff morale.

Recommendations
It is recommended that the Faculty carry out a review of all job titles, levels and salaries to determine if inequities exist and initiate job re-classifications where appropriate. Faculty

level directives to departments on how to proceed would be useful in providing guidance and developing uniformity. The development of a process within Engineering to allow staff to initiate a job re-classification process should be considered. This would need to be studied to determine feasibility and how best to implement.

This issue also needs to be dealt with at the University level and could be part of the overall review of the staff compensation process. A review of Human Resources is recommended including the policies and procedures for this department and its overall operations.

3. Career Path
One reason staff feel that it is difficult to advance within the university is that there are no defined career paths in most departments.

Recommendations
Where possible, departments, in conjunction with Human Resources should develop career paths for staff. The feasibility of doing this will vary from department to department, and function to function. However we are aware of two departments outside of Engineering that have recently developed career paths with the help of Human Resources. The Faculty should encourage this activity as much as possible. In cases where no specific career path can be developed, staff should be able to access information related to job requirements so that they could if they wished, develop skills and knowledge necessary to advance. (See also Section I-4 – Training) An active program in the form of job counselling provided by Human Resources could advise staff on job areas for potential advancement.

4. Training and Development
There are several aspects to training and development for staff. These include personal development (not directly job related), personal job skills development and job procedures training.

In general, training for staff is not occurring in an organized and effective manner within the Faculty. Although the University has a policy on educational programs for staff and Faculty (#4 – Benefits to Faculty and Staff Undertaking Part-time Educational Programs) staff experience is that this is not actively encouraged. Part of the problem may be the current workloads and budget pressures in the Faculty. Specialized courses for technicians, in particular those outside the university, can be costly and time consuming. Human Resources does offer some personal job skills courses that can be taken by staff.

At the university level, training in university functions and procedures is very limited. Staff do not have the opportunity to learn about procedures and functions that would assist them in applying for higher level positions. This can also contribute to lengthy periods of adjustment for departments who hire staff for jobs they are qualified for overall, but lack job knowledge related to university procedures in some areas.

Recommendations

The Faculty should develop an organized approach to encourage staff training and development and provide the means to obtain that training. Funding should be available at the Faculty level to accommodate department requests for staff training. A clearly defined policy/procedure should be developed to provide guidance to the departments and their staff. Issues such as time off, travel expenses, criteria for taking courses should be addressed.

Other considerations would be mentoring programs, job shadowing, career paths, cross training, shared job duties and rotating tasks.

The University should be encouraged to provide resources to develop and provide in-house training programs for university procedures and functions. For example, academic procedures such as student records, course scheduling, etc and administrative procedures such as purchasing, accounts payable, financial records etc. Staff would be encouraged to take these courses to add to their skills and prepare for applying to other jobs. This has the potential to increase staff skills, provide a better trained work force and also reduce transition times for staff going to new positions.

5. Staff Representation/Support Resources

Generally staff feel that they have no organizational support when it comes to having their problems heard or addressed. Within the Faculty of Engineering there is no formal representation of staff in the Faculty decision making process. At the moment, staff are being included and consulted as part of the Faculty planning process, however, on an ongoing basis, the two main Engineering governing bodies, Engineering Faculty Council and the Academic Policy Committee, do not have any staff representation. In Engineering Faculty Council all other constituents including undergraduate students, graduate students and representatives from other faculties have formal status.

At the University level there is an unbalanced organizational structure where faculty and staff are treated in very dissimilar ways. Unlike faculty who have a strong Faculty Association and a Memorandum of Agreement, staff have neither. In fairness to the Staff Association, it appears that University management does not look upon that organization or respect it similar to the Faculty Association. The recent request by the Staff Association for a Memorandum of Agreement similar to the faculty was flatly rejected. The University cites the need for quality when expanding programs and hiring new faculty. Faculty student ratios are being addressed. Staff, on the other hand, are advised "to do less with less". No consideration appears to be taken for staff complement in light of all the expansion that is taking place. Faculty salaries can be increased at anytime with the authority of the Provost. There is no process for changing staff salaries apart from the annual merit process. Human Resources, while having no control over faculty matters, does exercise control over staff in the areas of compensation, career advancement, etc. However, it is staff's impression and experience that instead of supporting staff, Human Resources is seen as an impediment to staff advancement and improvement.

There does not appear to be any will on the part of senior management to address the many staff issues. Based on the above staff feel they are not viewed as an integral part of

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the University but in effect are a secondary consideration. Pizza parties and feel-good messages from senior management cannot overcome the everyday problems that exist for staff at the University. Staff are repeatedly told they are an important part of the university community but that does not appear to be the case when staff issues need to be addressed.

Recommendations
The Faculty should consider including staff representation on Engineering Faculty Council and the Academic Policy Committee. It is suggested that a Staff Committee be created within Engineering to provide a forum for staff to have a formal voice in the operations of the Faculty. Representatives of that committee could be included in Faculty Council and APC.

At the University level, the Faculty must make efforts to convey the message to senior management that action needs to be taken to address staff issues at that level.

II Work Environment
1. Workload
The expansion in Engineering over the past seven years has been significant and will continue for several years. This includes not only new undergraduate programs but overall increases in existing undergraduate programs and the current efforts to increase graduate student enrolment. When new programs are implemented, staff complement, administrative and technical, is considered for work directly related to the new programs. However, the workload that is generated affects the general department and Faculty level functions such as undergrad and graduate functions, financial record-keeping, secretarial services etc, is not addressed. More programs and more students mean more faculty, more starter grants, more research applications, more student labs, more student marks, more course scheduling, more scholarships, more payroll, more computing, etc, etc. Another factor is the significant downloading of work from academic support departments, adding further to the workload for staff in Engineering. It is not realistic to expect that current staff levels will be adequate to handle the additional workload. The current problems are apparent in the amount of overtime staff are incurring and also the increase in stress levels.

Recommendations
The Faculty and the University do not appear to be addressing the consequences of consistent and ongoing expansion as it affects staff workload. The Faculty should initiate a comprehensive review of staff workloads with the view to determining the adequacy of staff complement. Items to consider are:
-staff to faculty ratios for administrative and technical staff
-staff to student ratios
-amount of paid and unpaid overtime
-occurrence of stressed out staff
-allocation of staff in various areas

The Faculty should make the University aware of the problems that appear to be related to

understaffing in the academic support departments. Full reviews of academic support departments should be carried out by the University to evaluate the adequacy of staff complements.

2. Stress
Staff have expressed concerns that stress levels are rising in many areas and positions. Workload is a major factor driven by Faculty growth.

Recommendations
The Faculty should look at stress to see how it is affecting productivity, job satisfaction, working relations etc. The Faculty should take steps to educate managers and supervisors to the potential for staff stress related problems. A process should be available to staff to be able to bring their concerns to their supervisors or managers without fear of negative consequences. Ideally there should be a more organized approach to dealing with stress at the university level.

3. Security and Safety
There are several staff concerns related to safety and security. Generally it is felt that there is inadequate campus security in that there are not enough patrols to provide an effective level of surveillance. The recent number of break-ins in the Faculty is a concern for personal safety, should staff be present when such an attempt is made.

Other safety concerns relate to physical environment conditions such as lack of timely snow removal from walkways and parking lots. Several recent incidents have pointed out the problems in this area. The potential exists for serious injuries to all university personnel.

Comments were also received on lab safety particularly lack of enforcement of safety procedures. There is an apparent lack of supervision during evenings and week-ends.

Recommendations
The Faculty is currently looking at ways to improve security within the Faculty itself. The Dean has established a committee within APC to review and make recommendations. The Faculty also intends to put forward a case to the Provost for improved security and this will likely be a campus wide effort. New or updated security systems are being considered to provide effective security.

Concerns related to environmental conditions on campus should be communicated by the Faculty to the appropriate departments .

4. Working Conditions
Other staff concerns related to working conditions include:
-ageing infrastructure such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning inadequacies
-absence of natural light in some areas
-inadequate computer support
-outdated lab equipment

Recommendations

Departments need to incorporate any requests for new equipment etc in their plan and consult with staff on these issues. The Faculty should encourage departments to collect information on all of the above as part of their planning process.

III Working Relations/Communications – Internal (to the Faculty)
1. Reporting Structure

Since reporting structures vary from department to department, concerns identified by staff may not apply to all departments. Lack of a clear reporting structure was the main concern. Staff can be left with uncertainties about who supervises them and who they should take direction from. Technicians seemed to have this problem more than administrative staff.

There were also concerns related to who could have input to a staff member's performance evaluation.

Recommendations

Departments need to be aware of the need for effective reporting structures and as part of the planning process undertake to review their current structures. Obtaining staff input would be an integral part of that process. Improving reporting structures could facilitate improved communications and productivity by removing ambiguities about work duties and work priorities.

The issue of input to a staff member's performance evaluation should be considered in light of the guidelines set out by Human Resources.

2. Communication

Staff generally felt that communications in the departments need to be improved. Communications are not consistent and often seem to be on a need-to-know basis only when general distribution would be best. Some examples where communications were lacking include:
  - department staff and faculty not aware that a staff member was leaving the department until three days prior to that person leaving
  - new faculty arriving with no introduction to staff
  - general lack of communication between instructors, faculty members, technicians, teaching assistants

With the lack of communication in some areas, staff often feel they are not part of the decision-making process and therefore not valued in the department. Also mentioned was the lack of verbal expression of appreciation or commendation for a job particularly well done.

Recommendations

There are several suggestions to improve communications within departments and the Faculty as a whole. To encourage best practices perhaps some direction should come from the Faculty level. This could include recommending that all departments have regular faculty and staff meetings. In larger departments separate staff meetings might be considered as well. Staff felt that this would help improve understanding between the various groups. Departments should work with staff to evaluate and improve communications within the department.

At the Faculty level, a committee for staff should be considered. This would include a broad spectrum of representation from departments and including both admin and technical staff. Further, formal staff representation should be considered for both the Academic Policy Committee and Engineering Faculty Council. Representatives to these bodies could be determined by the Faculty level staff committee. (see also Staff Representation/Staff Support I-5)

3. Conflict Resolution
Conflicts can occur as a result of circumventing reporting structures and established policies and procedures. There is a concern that staff members' rights are not being considered.

Recommendations
Staff support should be available at the Faculty level to aid staff members with grievance issues.
There needs to be a procedural mechanism in place to resolve problems.

IV Working Relations/Communications – External (to the Faculty)
1. Academic Support Departments
Staff in Engineering have found that dealing with academic support departments has been getting more and more difficult. It is felt that the biggest problem is understaffing in just about all support departments such as Registrar's, Grad Studies, Research, Finance, Human Resources and Plant Operations. The operations of the academic departments are being hampered by the inability of academic support departments to provide the necessary services in a timely manner. It is also evident from dealing with staff in these areas that they are under a great deal of stress trying to cope with their current workloads. The understaffing in these areas affects operations of academic departments across campus particularly when trying to get problems resolved. Staff shortages in academic support departments such as Registrar's and Grad Studies work has also resulted in downloading of work to the academic departments. (see section II 1)

Recommendations
If the Faculty and the University are to achieve planned goals related to increasing enrolments in existing and new undergraduate programs and graduate programs, academic support services issues need to be resolved. The Faculty should bring these problems to the attention of senior management as soon as possible. Improvements need to be made to allow for quicker response times from the academic support departments. This would cut everyone's work load because it would not be necessary to keep following up on the same

items. However the Faculty should also be taking every opportunity to respond to requests from academic support departments for assistance in making processes run smoother and more efficiently. One example is the recent request from the Accounts Payable department in Finance for assistance in improving the accuracy and completeness of expense documentation. Currently 60% of documents sent to Accounts Payable are incomplete or contain errors that require additional work by staff in that area to complete and process.

2. Communications

Within the university information is not distributed on a consistent and timely basis. Changes to policies and procedures in various academic support departments are not passed on to the appropriate persons in the academic departments. Staff find out about many changes only when they actually try to carry out their duties. This creates additional work that could be avoided with proper communications. Computerized systems are implemented without sufficient input from user groups and are often rolled out before they are truly ready. Systems are shut down without prior notification to users. It seems likely that part of the problem is the understaffing in many of the academic support departments.

There is no general forum for staff to present their views on University matters. The cancellation of the Gazette eliminated the "Letters to the Editor", the one venue staff had to publicly air their views. Not everyone can access e-mail and the web to view the current Daily Bulletin and the Bulletin does not have a formal section for comments and views.

Recommendations

Communications within the University need to be improved to enable all staff to work efficiently, not just those in the Faculty. Information on changes in academic support departments' procedures could be posted to websites and automatic e-mailings could be used to notify appropriate parties and ensure that information is distributed promptly.

A general forum should be developed to allow all members of the University community to present comments and opinions related to the university.