

Facilities Services Employee Engagement Report

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Exclusively for



Provided by

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* Survey responses are color coded to reflect a passing score (60 and above) or a failing score (59 and below). An agreement to a question is defined by combining strongly agree and agree. A disagreement by combining strongly disagree, disagree and unsure.

CHARGE AND SCOPE

Charge

An underpinning to the charge is that employees should expect a respectful work environment including a fair distribution of work, respect for each other, and a sense of teamwork and pride for the work done at the college. Supervisors are in charge of their work areas and responsible for getting work done by distributing assignments, explaining work procedures, communicating well and treating employees fairly. The managers and leaders above the supervisors set the tone for the work environment and they, like everyone else, are expected to act in a principled, moral way, while making decisions, and in the manner they carry themselves. Employees are there to do the work efficiently and to offer ideas on how work can be done better, and faster, and to cooperate with job tasks. Each group- employees, supervisors and leaders are held to a standard that befits their position.

The goal of this work is to assess and make recommendations to improve the work environment of the Facilities Services Department including providing information on barriers that hinder productivity and employee engagement*. A thorough analysis to be conducted including recommendations for corrective actions. The opinions of staff and management at all levels to be solicited in order to provide balanced input to the process. The required deliverable is the identification of short- and long-term strategies focused on reinforcing a positive and productive work environment in which employees feel engaged to their work and to the college and which enhances productivity.

Scope

The assessment of the Facilities Department includes the following groups: custodial services for both residential and academic buildings, grounds and landscaping, building maintenance, core trades, heating plant, central stores, facilities planning/construction, environmental health and safety, Mahar stockroom, utilities and fleet garage, totaling 250 (staff and supervisors). A tiered methodology to discover information was utilized beginning with an anonymous employee survey. Responses to the survey were acceptable (62% employee and 90% supervisor). Next, focus groups were conducted for approximately 30 employees and lastly stakeholders meetings (individual interviews) to get information from leadership (both management and union) and selected others.

***Definition of Employee Engagement:** An engaged employee is committed to their organization's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success, and one who gains a measure of well-being from their work.

BACKGROUND AND ASSUMPTIONS

1. SUNY Oswego is a prominent institution and is routinely noted by Princeton Review as one of the top 225 colleges in the Review's 11 state region. The campus consists of 595 acres with a total square footage of 3,456,016. Oswego has 8034 enrolled student FTE's and 4056 residential students employing 1092 employees. Oswego students enroll in its College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, School of Education, School of Business, School of Communication, Media and Arts. In total Oswego offers more than 110 programs of study, as well as graduate degree and certificate programs. The sponsors for this project are Mitch Fields, Associate Vice President Facilities and Amy Plotner, Assistant Vice President Human Resources.
2. The leadership team for Facilities consists of:
 - Mitch Fields, Associate Vice President- Facilities
 - Mary DePentu, Director of Facilities Maintenance and Operations
 - Eric Foertch, Director, Environmental Health and Safety
 - Alan Bradberry, Director, Facilities Major Projects
3. The CSEA Labor Management Committee consists of:
 - Mike Pisa, Associate Director, Infrastructure (CTS)
 - Joyce Jaskula, Human Resources Manager
 - Nick Lyons, VP for Administration and Finance
 - April Tuttle, Secretary and CSEA Secretary
 - Casey Walpole, Clerk, Local CSEA Vice President
 - Daniel Hoefler, Electrician, Local Treasurer
 - Joseph Micelli, Truck Driver, Local CSEA President
 - Donna Monette, Housing Custodial, Union Delegate
 - Amy Plotner, Assistant Vice President, Human Resources
4. SUNY Oswego's Facilities Services Department employs approximately 250 employees, which includes: custodial services for both residential and academic buildings, grounds and landscaping, building maintenance, core trades, heating plant, central stores, facilities planning/construction, environmental health and safety, Mahar stockroom, utilities and fleet garage. The Department oversees maintenance and construction activities for campus property, including approximately 50 buildings. The workforce is unionized with the majority of employees being represented by the Civil Service Employees Association, Inc. (CSEA).
5. Previously a staffing level assessment was completed in order to provide an objective report on the numbers of employees who are tasked to do facilities work, making comparisons to staffing levels at other SUNY's and relevant private institutions. This assessment was an initial step to respond to the question: "Is Oswego's Facilities Services Department staffed appropriately"? The assessment found that the staffing levels, generally, are appropriate.*

*See report issued by OneGroup- Consultant Services Report- Staffing Assessment- October 2015

6. This project builds on the staffing assessment by aiming to probe and identify elements that impact job performance and hinder productivity and engagement. The context is one of change, not dissimilar to that occurring at other SUNY's: tighter budgets, controlled spending, broader work responsibilities, head count control and higher expectations for work performance, etc. All of this impacting an aging workforce whose memory of better days – more robust budgets, more employees, etc. – distracts them from accepting the changing context. Hence, a stepped process where initially the size of the work force is compared to other colleges followed by an intense examination across other dimensions. The ability of a workforce to accomplish work tasks and to adapt to a changing environment can be measured over the following dimensions.
 1. Size – Is the workforce large enough to perform their work tasks?
 2. Does the workforce have the proper tools, equipment, etc.?
 3. Are there policy or contract impediments (e.g., absenteeism) that detract from actual hours on the job?
 4. Is a training plan in place such that new employees are oriented to their tasks and current employees are trained when technology advances?
 5. Is the workforce ready? Are relationships with workers and supervisors sound enough or do they deter from job performance?
 6. Is trust strong enough to sustain good performance?
 7. Is the supervisory cohort managing the workforce to attain optimal productivity?

METHODOLOGY

First, a confidential employee survey was utilized. The survey did not require a signature and steps were taken so that true anonymity was preserved. The survey responses (employee 62% and supervisors 90%) were sent electronically to OneGroup where the data was assembled and analyzed.

The survey data was then summarized into themes in a careful fashion so that individual comments could not be identified. These themes were discussed with employees who volunteered to attend the focus group meetings. Between 10-15% of the workforce agreed to attend confirming the themes without suggesting edits and adding examples that illustrated the accuracy of the themes.

Lastly, a series of one on one interviews were held with stakeholders. Stakeholders included the Labor Management Committee, Leadership team, and selected others. This group provided examples and validated the themes.

In addition, regular updates were provided to employee and supervisory audiences to promote strong communications and an ongoing dialogue.

ASSESSMENT *

The following comments were determined after distilling information from employee surveys, focus groups and stakeholder meetings.

- The project information discovery process (employee survey, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews) was the first time a transparent and comprehensive process was deployed and employees responded vigorously.
- Employees have high marks for:
 - Physical working condition
 - Their understanding of their job role
 - They like the work they do
 - Feeling safe on the job
 - Their willingness to give extra effort
- Despite the existence of an Open Door Policy and access to HR, the employee's feelings, thoughts and ideas are perceived by some, as not broadly listened to or considered. Those employees feel bottled up and in some cases feel that Supervisors and leaders are not interested in what they might say.
- There is a lack of confidence in going to Facilities leadership with issues. HR is seen as a non-player, isolated in their office, not visible, the perception is they are unwilling to be proactive in problem solving. The head of HR is a trusted confidant of union leadership (and other college leaders), but her team's campus reputation suffers because of lack of visibility and unwillingness to be proactive in problem-solving.
- Employees have a low degree of trust in what they are told and have low confidence in leadership. They do not see solid follow-up on departmental objectives and do not feel their care and well-being is being well attended to.
- Employees report a low spirit of cooperation and are not informed ahead of time on changes that impact them. They do not feel recognized for their work and see unfairness in decision making.
- The main themes** from employees (consistently stated in employee surveys, focus groups, stakeholders).
 - Lack of Fairness
 - Lack of Spirit and Cooperation
 - Lack of Recognition for Work
 - Lack of Trust
 - These are the critical areas of focus for the work ahead
- In order to make a difference, all parties will need to accept responsibility for making changes in the work environment. A "WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER" theme is necessary as future steps in the process are considered.
- The next steps must be designed to open up the work environment to new ideas and to the creativity of those that do the work.

*Generally speaking, the Oswego survey results (including focus and stakeholder meetings) were more positive than others seen in this consultant's experience. Also, it is not unusual for comments to be critical when the employees have never been surveyed before and when recent belt tightening has occurred.

**See Attachments H and I for more detail.

- A set of overarching principles is necessary to guide the work ahead. These principles are strategic influencers that will help to move the direction of the culture.
- They are:
 - Shared Responsibility: WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
 - The work ahead will take time
 - Build on low hanging fruit opportunities
 - Combine short and long term strategies
 - Care for employees
 - Clarity- We are defined by what we say, how we say it and our actions
 - Fairness
 - Effective and continuous communications
 - Tolerance
 - Follow-ups to ensure what we say will happen- does happen!
 - Measure success and report out
 - Leaders must model change
 - Set a new baseline
 - Move quickly to achieve traction
 - Speed up the decision making process
 - Be open to ideas from all sides
- Effective solutions will require Facilities leadership to:
 - Manage and lead the change initiatives and to view the work ahead as an opportunity.
 - Show unity.
 - Be visible, open to new ideas, and available. Be a listener.
 - Make a commitment to transparency and comprehensive communications.
 - Embrace HR as a partner.
 - Participate in designing a set of comprehensive communications.
 - Participate in designing a set of competencies for leadership and supervisors to be used as a measure of effectiveness and performances; HR needs to be a full partner in competency design and how they will be used; the CSEA LMC should be invited to have input.
 - Model an open environment to encourage employees to offer ideas and to ask questions.
 - Model effective interpersonal relations.
 - Ask for help, if needed.
- Effective solutions will require Facilities employees to:
 - Embrace their responsibility in the process.
 - Model good and consistent behavior toward fellow employees, supervisors, and leadership.
 - Speak out and voice opinions without expecting all your ideas are good ones.
 - Be constructive.
 - Accept that change will take time and that change can happen quicker with your participation.
 - Listen.

- Effective solutions will require HR to:
 - Embrace their responsibility in the process.
 - Participate in scrutinizing feedback and making changes in the way HR operates.
 - Take a fresh look at how you interact with employees and how they (your customers) expect you to interact.
 - Develop a set of competencies, seeking input from Facilities Leadership, supervisors, employees and other client departments so that HR's contribution and effectiveness can be measured.
 - Listen.

- Effective solutions will require the CSEA LMC to:
 - Provide ongoing feedback to Nick, Amy and Mitch.
 - Embrace their responsibility in the process.
 - Participate vigorously in initiatives to improve the work environment.
 - Be a visible supporter.
 - Listen.

RECOMMENDATIONS- SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM

1. Associate Vice President Fields to set the tone for the work ahead by:
 - Announcing his acceptance of the report recommendations
 - Planning to meet with Facilities Department leadership, Supervisors, HR, and CSEA LMC to outline next steps and to follow-up in writing, so that all have a clear understanding
 - Taking an active interest in the process
 - Participating in the meetings and asking for reports and feedback
 - Periodically showing up at meetings unannounced to gauge progress
 - Establishing the notion of WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

2. Establish committees* to do a deep dive on the work relationship and design interventions for positive change. Committees to be formed to include the following:
 - Custodial services (residential and academic)
 - Grounds and landscaping
 - Core/trades
 - Central stores
 - Facilities planning/construction
 - Environmental health and safety
 - Mahar stockroom
 - Utilities and fleet garage
 - These committees will work for the next academic year to identify the problem and install correction measures.

3. Ensure that employee input is invited and welcomed by:
 - Inviting employees to participate on committees
 - Reporting to employees on a quarterly basis the status of the solution set, inviting comments and ideas
 - Reinforcing and re-opening the open door policy
 - Maintaining an up to date web page

4. Install a trust but verify system where the implementation of decisions is checked to ensure compliance. Also ask employees to assist by reporting non-compliance.

5. Establish a scorecard and metrics to measure success (LMC task).

6. Establish longer-term initiatives to:
 - Define job competencies (employees, supervisors, leaders, and HR)
 - Define a way to incorporate the competencies into performance evaluations
 - Invite employee input into the evaluation
 - Define training programs to support a positive work environment
 - Invite employees to add input to the evaluations of their supervisors
 - Ask supervisors to add input to the development of competencies
 - Ask supervisors to evaluate their leaders' performance
 - Ask employees, supervisors and peers of HR to evaluate HR's performance

*The committees are designed to bring people together for facilitated discussion to identify problems in their work areas that hinder personal success and impact productivity and trust.

SOLUTION SET

ISSUE	ACTION	PURPOSE	TIMELINE
1. Shared Responsibility	Mitch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accept recommendations - Meet with Facilities leadership - HR - Union leadership - Supervisors - Employees 	To solidify that "WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER" and to define responsibilities of all parties: Leaders, Supervisors, Union Leadership, HR and Employees. Deep involvement by everyone is necessary to make a difference.	TBD
2. Communications	Mitch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report to Facilities employees - Deliverables/timing/measures for success - Continued use of Facilities webpage to update progress - Follow-up meetings 	To achieve closure and to report on next steps. To announce progress meetings and to discuss measures for success. To emphasize combination of short term and long term strategies are necessary to change culture.	TBD
3. Custodial*	Committee of Supervisors and Employees	To provide a forum for problem solving and problem identification for employees and supervisors to achieve resolution on issues in their work environment. Facilitated discussions aimed to make changes based on input from all sides.	TBD
4. Grounds*	Committee of Supervisors and Employees	To provide a forum for problem solving and problem identification for employees and supervisors to achieve resolution on issues in their work environment. Facilitated discussions aimed to make changes based on input from all sides.	TBD
5. Trades*	Committee of Supervisors and Employees	To provide a forum for problem solving and problem identification for employees and supervisors to achieve resolution on issues in their work environment. Facilitated discussions aimed to make changes based on input from all sides.	TBD
6. Supervisors*	Meeting with supervisors to discuss approach to supervision and to listen to their ideas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet to discuss competencies and to listen to their ideas - Write charge to supervisors 	To provide a forum for problem solving and problem identification for employees and supervisors to achieve resolution on issues in their work environment. Facilitated discussions aimed to make changes based on input from all sides.	TBD

* 3,4,5,6 are examples of committees pending a decision from AVP Fields on the committee constitutes.

ROUGH TIMELINE*

Acceptance of Consultant Report including Recommendations	August 2016 - September 2016
Committees formed and charged/Facilitation secured	September 2016
Committees Meet	October 2016 - May 2017
Communicate Progress	January 2017
Year End Progress Review and Summer Plan	May 2017
Kick-off Year 2 of Committee Work	September 2017
Committees Meet	September 2017 - May 2017
Year 2 Progress Review	May 2018

*To be defined further after discussion with Mitch/Amy
Note: Resurvey employees at 18 month point