

CEER (Certificated Employee Employer Relations)

Minutes – April 5, 2021 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Members present: Ghada Al-Masri, Vy Le, Katherine Michel, Jeff O’Connell, Rob Smedfjeld, Shairon Zingsheim

Special guests present: Elizabeth Blau, Shelly Spratt, Eric Bishop

1. Minutes: The revised minutes from March 8 were accepted. They will be posted on the CEER website (<http://ohloneufo.org/ceer-2/>).
2. Mindful Communication: The dialogue continued from our March meeting.

Some ideas and perspectives mentioned:

- a. It would be good to have a webpage of resources for dealing with conflicts.
- b. Feedback from the DEI survey may provide ideas for what needs to be addressed.
- c. We need to distinguish between unbiased assistance versus processes that may get triggered when people go to HR for assistance.
- d. Individuals seeking help may be wanting to avoid “starting a fire”.
- e. The example of the BIT team is different in that the members of this new group should not be having/exerting power over the situations.
- f. The group can publicize EAP resources, including counseling.

The group decided to collaboratively work on a written proposal/vision of what we’d been discussing. Katherine typed the document to share via Google Docs (the text, as it was written at the end of the meeting, is shown on the next page).

During the document development, Dr. Bishop joined the meeting and expressed support for the overall idea.

Tasks before next meeting: Group editing of the proposal/vision document

The group set the next meeting for April 19th at 2pm.

Purpose Statement

- To empower individuals with tools and resources to support them in conflict resolution or to support them in engaging with difficult conversations that they may have challenges with

Outcomes

- A place (perhaps physical?) where employees can feel heard, feel safe, and have difficult conversations
- Provide space for employees to choose an option to *either* be heard *or* to receive strategy (i.e., do you just need someone to listen? or do you need advice on how to solve a problem?)
- Allow employees to take accountability and enhance their engagement by understanding communication styles and conflict management styles
- Proactively encourage positivity (e.g., affirmation challenges, EAP) to promote self-awareness and self-reflection
- Hold workshops to provide tools, share resources, and/or facilitate conversations within small group settings (e.g., within a division)

Structure

- Representative across the college: staff, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, administrators
 - This is informal, rather than going through the formal HR process
 - The most vulnerable among us need to have say in this (e.g., deans, part-time faculty members)
- Model (UC Irvine): Reaffirming Ethnic Awareness and Community Harmony (R.E.A.C.H.)
 - Program through the multicultural center focusing on conflict resolution and empathy development
 - Five people

Logistics

- Application process to join the team
- Commit to training
- Provide release time

Training considerations

- Confidentiality, trust, setting aside power dynamics
 - This needs to occur so that *everyone* buys in (e.g., faculty members *and* deans)
- Decide when an employee has a complaint vs. when action is required
 - How to diagnose a problem?
 - Step one: consultation

Next steps

- Who is owning this? Who reviews applications?
 - Office of the President?
 - Office of Equity and Campus Inclusivity?
 - Office of Professional Development, Employee Onboarding, and Engagement?
 - Board of Trustees? (to codify in policy/procedure)
 - Do we need to hire an individual to facilitate and train the team (e.g., hire a consultant)?
 - Create an “Office of Institutional Culture”?
- Restorative justice models?
- Parallels with “brave spaces” group? Coming together in some way?
- **Maybe hiring Rob :)**