

CEER (Certificated Employee Employer Relations)

Minutes – April 19, 2021 2:00pm – 4:00pm

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

Special guests present: Sandy Bennett, Elizabeth Blau, Shelly Spratt

1. Mindful Communication: The dialogue continued from our April 5 meeting. Katherine took notes in the Google Docs document, including the following:
 - a. The proposed name for the group is the “Council for Peaceful Resolution” (i.e., “CPR”).
 - b. The CPR group will be under the Office of Professional Development, Employee Onboarding, and Engagement. Participants in the “Trust Huddle” will be a good place to find initial CPR members. Additional members can be pulled in, if needed for college-wide inclusiveness.
 - c. It will be important to create an AP (Administrative Procedure) so that CPR has funding, an agreed-on structure, accountability (including a guarantee of confidentiality), and strength of existence so that future administrators cannot unilaterally remove it.
 - d. CPR should reach out to the representative employee groups (UFO, CSEA, SEIU, and DDAS) to ensure effectiveness in fitting into pre-grievance procedures for each group.
 - e. CPR should create mentoring relationships to foster/advance a growth mindset as turnover occurs within the group.
 - f. Internal confidentiality within the group will be important in case one of the CPR members is involved or could be perceived as being involved (as in a situation of an employee seeking help from CPR and whose supervisor is a CPR member). Zoom meetings may be a more comfortable way to meet so that the person can’t be seen entering a specific office.

The group will take one more week to fine-tune the Google Docs document (the text, as it was written at the end of the meeting, is shown on the next page), the outcome of which will hopefully be an AP draft that Shairon can take through the AP approval process.

This will likely be the last scheduled CEER meeting for the semester. The remainder of the work will be done via email and in Google Docs.

Proposed Name: Counsel for Peaceful Resolution (CPR)

Purpose Statement

- To empower employees with tools and resources to assist in conflict resolution and to support individuals when they engage in challenging conversations.

Proposed Location

- Office of Professional Development, Onboarding, and Employee Engagement
 - Possibly use the “Trust Huddle” group as a starting point? This includes classified professionals and managers who went through training in January (and a few faculty members went through training a few years ago).
 - In addition, the “Speed of Trust” workshop will be included in the onboarding process (the new employee orientation process).

Proposed Institutionalization

- Formal: create an Administrative Procedure (AP) to identify the pre-grievance process so that this group (1) has monetary resources, (2) has an agreed-on structure, (3) has accountability (e.g., guarantee of confidentiality, including *within* the group), and (4) cannot be easily removed in the future
- Informal: promote awareness of the group and resources (e.g., the group could reach out to UFO, SEIU, and CSEA to work out how this group would fit in with each of the unions as a pre-grievance procedure), create mentoring relationships to foster/advance growth mindset as turnover occurs within the group

Outcomes

- A safe place (campus environment and perhaps physical location?) where employees can feel heard and have difficult conversations respectfully
- 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 techniques
- Proactively encourage positivity (e.g., affirmation challenges, EAP) to promote self-awareness, self-reflection, and empathy both for others and oneself
- 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 and other middle management, part-time faculty members)
 - We need to think about the representative for the management group very carefully--what if one of their employees wants to come to the group?

Possible Models

- 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 (5-6 students with a faculty/administrative advisor).
 - Cohort model with year long intensive training on DEI. This included training from the Counseling dept. On strategies of interpersonal communication and working with individuals who have experienced trauma.
- University of Miami: Office of Institutional Culture (<https://culture.miami.edu>)

Logistics

- Application process to join the team
- Commit to training
- Provide release time and/or be part of employee's regular work assignment

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

- Go through the process to become an official AP
- Hand over to Sandy to start building the group (likely starting with the Trust Huddle)
 - Do we need to hire an individual to facilitate and train the team (e.g., hire a consultant)?
- Fall semester: look at the budget
 - *Maybe* trying to hire Rob, but it will be at a **very** high price (remember that he has negotiations experience!) :)