

MEMORANDUM

To: President Paul Fitzgerald and Provost Don Heller
From: Co-Chairs Grace Hum and Mary Wardell Ghirarduzzi
On Behalf of the Campus Climate Working Group
Re: Recommendations for Improvements to the USF Campus Climate
Date: August 4, 2017

Introduction

As you know, Rankin and Associates Consulting (R&A) conducted Focus Groups on April 10, 2017, to gather information from USF students, staff, faculty, and administrators about their perceptions of the campus climate. This information is being used to inform the Campus Climate Assessment questionnaire that will be distributed in fall 2017, and was given to the Campus Climate Working Group (CCWG) to start addressing the challenges at USF.

R&A conducted 16 focus groups: Staff – Hourly (union and non-union); Faculty of Color; Women Faculty; Transfer Students; Students Who Identify with Having a Disability; Staff of Color; Students who Self-Identify as Sexual and/or Gender Minorities; First-Generation Students; Staff – Salary (union and non-union); Adjunct Faculty; African American/Black Students; Asian American Students; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/Indigenous Students (including Native American); Latinx Students; International Undergraduate/Graduate Students; and Middle Eastern/North African/South Asian Students. A total of 109 people participated.

The members of the focus groups were all asked the same four questions:

1. How would you describe the climate for _____ (*insert the focus group being addressed*) at USF? Please feel welcome to provide examples.
2. What do you feel USF has implemented that has directly influenced your success at USF? Please feel welcome to provide examples.
3. What do you feel is the greatest challenge for you at USF? Please feel welcome to provide examples.
4. What suggestions do you have for improving the climate at USF?

R&A drafted “A Report on the Climate Assessment Focus Groups,” (Report) dated June 2017, which includes the results of the Focus Groups. Although we identified and invited specific individuals to attend the Focus Groups that correlated to the demographic of each Focus Group, the identities of the individuals who ultimately participated in the Focus Groups are anonymous. Additionally, based on our contract agreement with R&A, the Report is

confidential and only members of the CCWG have been allowed to review the Report. Consistent with the work that R&A has done with other campuses, R&A advised the CCWG to identify a few recommendations that could be made to the President and Provost for immediate consideration and response, so as to engender and build trust in the University's leadership to address the issues brought forward through the campus climate process.

On June 27, 2017, the CCWG met to discuss the results of the Focus Groups and to brainstorm potential recommendations that can be made to the University to improve the campus climate. As we brainstormed recommendations, we focused our discussion on solutions that would be easy to implement, would not require a great deal of financial expense, and would actually make a difference in the experience of our community members.

Recommendations

The three recommendations we would like to propose are (1) demonstrating a more inclusive environment for religious differences; (2) demonstrating a more inclusive environment for people with disabilities; and (3) improving the Public Safety Shuttle Service, as it relates to the Escort Service and Night Safety Program.

(1) Demonstrating a More Inclusive Environment for Religious Differences

Given that our students, faculty, and staff practice a wide variety of religions, we believe that the University could demonstrate a more inclusive environment by partnering with University Ministries more closely to improve the "[Holidays from Various Faiths](#)" webpage. Including additional religious holidays on this webpage and moving the webpage to a more prominent place, e.g., a link near the University or academic calendar, serves a symbolic purpose of recognizing our community members' varying religious affiliations; it also serves the practical purpose of providing senior administrators, professors, and supervisors with the necessary information related to religious accommodations.

(2) Demonstrating a More Inclusive Environment for People with Disabilities

The signage on University buildings for disability access can be improved. For example, many of the buildings have signs that say "No dogs allowed." Because service animals are allowed in University buildings and companion animals are allowed in residence halls and University buildings, these signs do not accurately convey our policy. The signage at Cowell Hall is another example of signage that can be improved. It would be helpful if the University included some signage to indicate that disability access is at the lower part of the lecture hall.

These are only two examples. We suggest that the University contact Student Disability Services to learn more about signage issues that can improve access for our community members that have disabilities.

(3) Improving the Public Safety Shuttle Service, as it relates to the Escort Service and Night Safety Program

Students very much appreciate the Public Safety Shuttle Service. But they have concerns about a variety of its operating procedures. For example, once students call for a shuttle, they are required to wait outside until the shuttle arrives. This raises a number of concerns. First, the length of the wait varies widely, sometimes as long as 45 minutes. If feasible, students would like the waiting time to be shortened. Second, students have no information about how long the wait will be. If feasible, students would like some communication about the approximate waiting time. Finally, given that the purpose of the Night Safety Program is to create a safer environment, students feel uneasy about being required to wait outside until the shuttle comes. If feasible, students would like to wait inside and to be sent an alert to go outside once the shuttle arrives.

Students also recommended the possibility of creating designated bus stops on campus and extending the hours of the Shuttle Service.

Conclusion

We are happy to discuss these recommendations with you. We hope and expect that the University's implementation of some or all of these suggested improvements and communication of that work will demonstrate the University's commitment to the process of improving the campus climate. In turn, we firmly believe this will increase our community's investment in the survey that we will ask them to complete in the fall. We look forward to our continued work together.