PACE Feedback Sessions: Summary of Responses

MCTC faculty, staff and administrators are working to improve communication across the campus. One example of this change is a new process for using survey results to enhance communication. In this report, we bring back the results of discussions about the PACE climate survey to the campus community.

In April, 2010, faculty, staff and administrators completed the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Survey, an annual campus climate survey given at MCTC for the past four years. According to the National Institute for Leadership and Institutional Effectiveness (NILIE) that publishes the assessment, the PACE Survey was designed to "promote open and constructive communication and to establish priorities for change" and NILIE recommends "implementing more channels for administrators/faculty and staff to share opinions, ideas and thoughts." Discussing the results of the PACE as a campus community allowed us to do both of those things.

Supervisors and deans across the campus held conversations with staff and faculty about the 2010 PACE Survey results in August and September, 2010. (The 2010 survey results showed that the five PACE college climate factors have decreased compared to the 2009 results and also fall below the mean ratings of the national PACE norm base.) Discussions centered on three questions:

- a. Why do you think there has been a decline in employee satisfaction?
- b. What are three things we can do to improve employee satisfaction?
- c. Where do you most engage information about the College?

Twenty-nine departments/units reported back on responses to these questions. To analyze the data, *content analysis* (a form of qualitative analysis designed to identify the most common themes in a set of responses) was conducted. Following that methodology, comments were first coded for main content (e.g. the comment "We need clarification on what decisions are made where" was related to the broader theme of "decision-making"). Multiple themes were identified and tallied to indicate how frequently certain themes arose. The most frequent themes were chosen as "factors" (see below) with which employees have the most concern. In addition, factors were divided into those that are internal to MCTC (e.g. communication issues) and those that are external to MCTC (e.g. the economy). Care was taken to include some ideas and comments from every department or unit from which responses were received.

The table below provides a summary of the responses provided by supervisors and deans to the SPA Office for analysis. Note that responses to Question 3 (above) followed no particular pattern and are not included in the summary table. Also, not all comments were included because the purpose of content analysis is to distill data into some meaningful themes versus reporting on all available data. Also, most comments fit into one of the six factors below. Next steps for action are described on pp. 6-7.

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INTERNAL FACTORS	REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
Major themes that emerged across all employee comments and suggestions	Comments that illustrate in detail areas of dissatisfaction	Specific suggestions for improving employee satisfaction
Decision-Making Rights and Process	"Confusion over which decisions are open and which are [already] made and who makes them." "People still feel decisions are already made before seeking feedback from broader constituents." "Faculty feel like their input in the hiring process…has not been valued sufficiently…[and] have expressed that they feel like some hiring decisions are made arbitrarily or without clear supportive rationale being explained." "A lot of suggestions by employees to improve but many of the ideas seem to have been dismissed so people feel disengaged." "We are asked for input but it still feels like the decisions are already made." "What are the criteria that a decision is made by? What is the rationale for decisions that have been made? A flowchart or samples would be helpful to communicate this to all employees." "Staff want more input into decisions [and] are wondering ''How much influence do I have to do my job?''' "I think that when people gripe about not getting enough information, we really mean that we are not getting the information about how important decisions are made. We get lots of other information."	"Flowchart the parameters of decision-making and the process for all to see." "Continue to make decisions that are well-researched and document those reasons." "Allow mixed committees to make final decisions, so it's collaborative." "We need clarification on what decisions are made where. It needs to be transparent." "It would be helpful to know why a suggestion was not taken and another path was chosen."

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Communication and Alignment Across Units and Departments	"Mixed messaging between union and administration." "[T]he College administration works on a business model and we work on an academic model." "E-mail, voicemail and other communication not acknowledged and/or responded to." "People do not read the communication sent/presented to them (e-mails, signs, etc.)." "[F]or the level of authority assigned to the faculty union, it was strangely omitted from the list of sources for information." ""There has developed a group of employees on faculty contract who…seems to have more access and influence with Administration than student services departments and directors, sometimes directly influencing decisions that affect the departments without the departments even being consulted." "Decision makers seem unaware of the day-to-day work loads within student services. Staff feels left out of key initiatives such as retention/graduation, yet we are vital to the success of these initiatives." "Staff, although highly skilled, does not feel their work is respected in the campus community." "Concerns, ideas, issues get lost in translation and the end result rarely reflects the initial idea/concern. Staff needs the opportunity to meet directly with Irene or Phil." "Value the work of Student Affairs personnel and include Staff as much as faculty are included." "Management only communicates with other managers, not employees."	"Have more time informally to build relationships." "Continue to do the reach out with lunch with the deans and Phil's office hours." "Administrators [should] become active participants in faculty discussions…It helps eliminate misinformation, it sets up good will…I experienced [that] this week." "Continue lunch with your dean – allows for informal conversations and relationship building." "Get admins (deans, Phil, Irene) out into the faculty ''task environment." "[S]ometimes [administration] responses seem like political spin and inconsistent with what happens. The budget meetings felt like an honest discussion." "Need a Student Affairs weekly update (similar to facilities update)." "Establish focus groups to gain opinions and to see what can be changed." "Anonymous suggestion box." "Have 'staff-only' meetings in order to have a venue to discuss concerns without fear of retaliation."

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Rewards and Accountability	"Receive negative feedback that deflates efforts." "Lack of accountability…some faculty/staff see other colleagues not doing their jobs but are not held accountable for results [and this] deflates those who are doing their jobs effectively." "Administration is too top down and impedes the ability to work efficiently." "I feel like a dog that is always told 'no.' That's not a good way to operate. Instead you should reward positive behavior."	"Employee recognition for doing a good job." "Truly hold underperforming staff accountable." "Progress to deal with non-performers moves at a snail's pace. The non-performers are bringing everyone down." "Ensure that Student Services staff feel supported (through increased staffing during ''rush'' times). This is starting to get addressed, but it needs to be even more strategic and planful." "Work on ways to incentivize employees (monetarily or otherwise)."
Job Roles, Training, Staffing Structure	"Staff development is siloed and should be part of the overall strategic development of all [employees]." "Overall process improvements (i.e. service delivery models) need to be emphasized rather than one-time quick fixes (i.e. untrained temps with limited availability). There is great concern that current staffing levels and reliance on student workers leaves us vulnerable and out of compliance with Federal regulations." "Process: the system doesn't have a manual for how to do things, like how to be an instructor, or if you are on a committee, you aren't sure whether your committee is making an actual decision or not, and then when things don't go the way you discussed, you get disappointed."	"Reorganize units and departments to reposition the human resource talent that exists in each area." "Institute an 'I Am Proud to Work at MCTC' initiative. So much of our workforce is proud of the work we do for our students and the taxpayers of MN." "[Use] flex time." "More opportunities for flex schedule, alternate schedule, work online or remotely." "Staff like the college wide development days, but they are not enough. Need department and role specific development also."

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EXTERNAL FACTORS	REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
Economy	"I believe there are factors outside of MCTC that are affecting the attitudes and morale of many people…1) overwhelming workloads, 2) a sense of non or under appreciation for working as hard as we do, 3) the impending fear of layoffs with the impending collapse of MN's economy by 2012." "Many of us feel that the MCTC administration and higher-ups in MNSCU…are not in touch with the trials we face each and every day in the performance of our…duties. Most of us love our jobs – please give us the moral and physical support we need…"	
Increased Enrollment	"Staffing levels have not kept pace with enrollment…people are tired and burned out." "Institutionally we try to be everything to everyone." "The workload is increasing for everyone due to increased enrollment. We need to work harder than ever to support the College. [But] some people do not want to work hard therefore they are suffering…" "Reduced staffing with increased enrollment, work demands and expectations. This does not leave any time for proactive planning, decision making or implementation."	"[W]e need to focus on who is our market…"

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CURRENT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN COMMUNICATION AND DECISION-MAKING

MCTC uses the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Action Project process to create long-term, systemic and positive changes in College processes. [1] In the past few years, two areas identified by the campus community as in need of improvement have included institutional communication and decision-making processes.

A current action project related directly to these issues is entitled **"Effective Institutional Structures and Practices for Internal Communication and Institutional Decision-Making."** The project was designed to answer and provide recommendations on the following issues:

1. What are the most effective lines of communication across the college to obtain information, provide input on important issues, and understand campus decision-making processes?

2. How can existing structures and resources be used more effectively to increase communication and involvement with decision-making and campus initiatives?

3. What new structures and resources should be put in place to improve communication and involvement in decision-making initiatives?

As of October 2010, the Internal Communication Action Project (ICAP) committee has already recommended the following improvements related to communication and decision-making processes. These improvements include:

* Using InsideMCTC, the biweekly employee email newsletter, as a common vehicle for communication across the college
* Developing an employee intranet as part of the website redesign project
* Implementing standardized meeting note templates and a decision-making checklist to be used in all committee work
* Using and making available to others decision-making flowcharts for key institutional decision-making processes

Staff and faculty improvement ideas (pp. 2-5) will be reflected in the ICAP committee's final recommendations which will appear in InsideMCTC in the next month.

Internal Communications Action Project (ICAP) Members

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[1] The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) emphasizes two reasons for accreditation: **assuring quality** and **stimulating improvement**. AQIP "Action Projects" involve staff, faculty and administrators in projects designed to stimulate quality improvements in areas selected for change. Completed AQIP projects include: **"Improving Employee Satisfaction through a Comprehensive Performance Development Program"** (2007) which led to an employee tuition reimbursement program and **"Financial Aid Process Mapping and Improvement"** (2009) which resulted in a decrease in processing time for students' financial aid awards. Other communication-related action projects have included "Engaging Employees in Internal Communications by Maximizing Technology" (2009).