

Performance Appraisal Process Review
Feedback Summary and Recommendations
Submitted on Behalf of the Ad Hoc Performance Appraisal Committee
June 24, 2013

Background

In the fall of 2012 the Department of Human Resources brought to the attention of the President and his cabinet the fact that fewer than half of staff had been evaluated during the previous appraisal period. In response to this information the President charged the Vice President for Business and Fiscal Affairs with the task of serving as the point person on the cabinet for efforts to ensure that all staff received performance evaluations in the future. An ad hoc committee was formed to address this purpose. Attached you will find a list of the original membership as well as the group's current make up. Upon further discussion by the group, the issue appeared to have two parts. The first being simply to get staff evaluated using our current system of performance evaluation. The second is to review our system to make sure that it is designed in ways that achieve the goals of performance evaluation as articulated by the campus community and to ensure that the process does not inherently provide disincentives for completing it. The Vice President for Multicultural Affairs & Community Engagement provided leadership for activities addressing the second issue.

In order to receive feedback from across the campus, the Business Managers for each unit were asked to gather information regarding the current process from staff and faculty who should have recently completed the performance appraisal process. This occurred during April and May of 2013 in the form of individual discussions and surveys. The feedback generally addressed six questions which are attached. Staff and faculty were also given the opportunity to provide feedback through their constituent groups, such as USAC and CSAC, at their respective meetings that were attended by the Vice President for Multicultural Affairs & Community Engagement to discuss this topic. Representatives from these groups were also members of the ad hoc committee. One hundred forty-five (145) groups and individuals responded representing twenty-one (21) units (i.e., divisions, colleges, and departments/offices) including the Lake Campus. A breakdown of this information is attached.

Summary of Comments

Several themes emerged in the feedback about the performance appraisal process at Wright State University. These themes related to the perceived purpose, current impact and changes people would suggest related to the process. The four themes that frequently reoccurred throughout the feedback were the benefit of having more consistency in the system of evaluation and greater convenience, the need to link evaluations to meaningful merit pay, and the desire for employees to have input into the performance appraisals of supervisors.

Most respondents understood the purpose of performance appraisals to be to provide an opportunity to review an employee's progress related to shared expectations/goals, acknowledge areas of strength as well as areas in need of improvement, draft a plan of professional development including what supervisors will do to better facilitate performance and set goals for the future. Despite a general consensus about what the purpose of performance appraisals should be, a recurring theme was that in many cases the ways in which they were conducted did not achieve this purpose. Some saw it as a way to meet accreditation standards and to have a procedure in place that would procedurally justify decisions related to raises. For example, in response to the question regarding the purpose of performance appraisals one person wrote:

"To provide regular feedback about job performance, identifying areas of strength and areas where improvement can be made. To create professional development plans on an annual basis and review the implementation of past plans. It is a coaching opportunity, but should not be the only feedback an employee has about his/her performance in the year. "

And another wrote:

"The appraisal process allows me to review my work, find areas where I can make improvements and processes which work well and may be expanded upon to facilitate greater achievements in the following year. It also allows me to reflect on what areas of my work are demanding the most time so that I can adjust my efforts to ensure that all of my commitments are met. Finally, it is an excellent opportunity to examine where I may be able to increase my contributions to the success of the University."

A faculty member responded:

"...This is the party line, but in reality it is used as a box-check for some accreditation standard. In practical terms, there is very little benefit in the current system. P&T is based on a grocery list, and it seems as if annual evals have little to do with it, as long as satisfactory progress toward P&T is being made."

In addition, individuals providing input through this process stressed that the formal performance appraisal should be one of many conversations regarding performance that occur throughout the year and that a more uniform process would be helpful but it would still need the flexibility to make it relevant to different types of work on campus. Several reported that no clear process or purpose has been articulated. For example:

"First, I wasn't aware we had 'a' process in place right now. It seems to me that there are a couple processes that a supervisor can use if he/she chooses, or can use whatever process they conceive. I know a new form was introduced last year. It was first introduced as optional, then mandatory, then optional again. At least that's the way I understood it..."

In terms of the impact of the current process, many individuals reported that it had little impact and was an unwarranted draw on their time because it is not linked to pay (merit), promotions or opportunities for professional development. Many indicated that the self-appraisal was an important part of the process but that the procedure needed refinement. Because of perceived inadequacies in the process over the past few years, several departments reported having developed supplemental forms to accompany whatever official evaluation form they were asked to use. It was also suggested that staff under union contract might need a different form. Another common (but somewhat contradictory) shortcoming that was noted was the inconsistency not only in terms of the process used but also how people rated performance and defined rating categories. For example one employee wrote:

“Honest answer? In reality, the performance appraisal system at WSU is pretty much a joke. In theory, the performance appraisal is supposed to monitor employee performance, provide opportunities for remediation, skill development and advancement, provide an opportunity for supervisor/supervisee communication, feedback and mentoring. I have found the system at WSU to be nothing more than an exercise in self-promotion. Supervisors regularly turn over the responsibility for evaluating staff to the staff, who drafts a glowing “report” for themselves, which the supervisor inevitably signs off on. It serves to systematically and artificially inflate the performance of marginal or average employees, while also limiting the true reporting of our highest achieving employees. This happens when somehow EVERYONE ends up receiving a superior performance rating. It isn’t a legitimate measure of employee performance.”

The timing of evaluation was also an issue raised by respondents. Several people suggested that the evaluation period should coincide with the fiscal or academic year rather than a calendar year. Several people indicated that the training offered about conducting performance evaluations was very helpful and should continue to be offered on a volunteer basis. Others thought it would be helpful for all new supervisors and new employees to receive training regarding performance appraisals. Another suggestion was that a system be developed to help employees track their accomplishments throughout the year. Some staff also indicated a need to allot time for the preparation of their supporting information for the performance appraisal as well as adequate time during the appraisal (“at least an hour”) for discussion.

In addition to the traditional information gathered, some believed that the process could be improved with input from peers. Many people providing feedback believed there should be a process that allowed employees to have input into the evaluations of their supervisors. A common sentiment expressed was that supervisors should be held accountable for ensuring that everyone receives a performance appraisal. For example, one person wrote:

“Supervisors should bear the burden of the appraisal process. I believe that supervisors should have to turn in evaluations of their employees before getting their raises. Their supervisors should not sign off on reviews that are done in only a cursory way (e.g., no narratives or examples provided to justify ratings). Greater accountability is needed in the process.”

And another responded:

“Develop a uniform system to be used campus wide. A single form should be mandated, standard mandatory training provided to all employees and some form of penalty developed for those who continue to fail to provide evaluations for their employees. The new system should stress self-evaluation by those being reviewed. Supervisors should provide overall comments and agree to or revise goals and objectives identified by those evaluated.”

Despite several calls for more uniformity, others stressed the need to be able to adapt the form to unique jobs. For example:

“It is difficult to pigeonhole every employee into each and every category on the current form.”

And, *“Emphasis on goals; current form is too focused on competencies.”*

Consistently, four themes reoccurred throughout the feedback. They were: (1) the need for a more structured, objective system of evaluation that is also customizable; (2) the desire for a more user friendly process; (3) the benefits of a clear link between appraisals to meaningful merit pay; and (4) the desire for employees to have input into the performance appraisals of supervisors.

Recommendations

Based on the feedback received and best practices, the Performance Appraisal Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. Develop an evaluation form that outlines a process of performance appraisal that is consistent with the University's value of putting the professional development of its people as its top priority. It will include clear instructions, definitions of terms and a clarification of rating scales. It will facilitate a discussion of performance based on established annual goals, competencies related to the individual's job description, a professional development plan and goals for the future. While providing for consistency in process, the form will provide the flexibility to adapt its content to make it relevant to the variety of critical work conducted by members of the University community. It will be the form used for the official evaluation of staff at Wright State University.
2. Develop a separate form for self-appraisal that includes, in addition to reflection on the employees' performance, suggestions regarding how the employees' supervisor can further assist the employee in meeting his/her goals.
3. Provide an opportunity for staff to provide input into their supervisor's evaluation. (Two options for this will be presented: one involving an annual survey of employees reporting to a particular supervisor and another involving a more involved “360” type evaluation to be conducted every 3 years.)

4. Integrate this into the evaluation process for those with supervisory responsibilities. Make completion of effective staff evaluations a core competency for supervisory staff.
5. Shift the evaluation period to correspond more closely with either the fiscal or academic year. In addition, shorten the period of time between the initiation of the process to its conclusion (to approximately one (1) month).
6. Tie merit pay to performance as evidenced by the performance appraisal.
7. In order to address issues of efficiency, user friendliness and the capacity to link appraisals directly to professional development opportunities, explore the implementation of a web-based performance appraisal system (with a target for implementation within three (3) years).
8. Continue to make workshops regarding ways to optimize the performance appraisal process available for both supervisory staff and those being evaluated. Have all new supervisors participate in training that includes how to conduct an effective performance appraisal.
9. Create a standing committee to review the effectiveness of the Wright State University performance appraisal process on an ongoing basis and to recommend incremental changes when needed that ensure continuous improvement related to the process.

Performance Appraisal Committee

Current Committee

Kimberly Barrett - Vice President, Multicultural Affairs & Community Engagement
Allan Boggs – Assistant Vice President, Human Resources
Albert Bondurant – Executive Director Organizational Development and Learning
Emily Hamman - Employee and Labor Relations Manager
George Heddlestone - Vice President, Communications and Marketing
Audwin Jones - Associate Director of Admissions, Undergraduate Admissions
Yi Li – Dean, College of Science and Mathematics
Henry Limouze - Associate Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs
John Mbagwu - Director of Accounting
Kym Sellers - Administrative Specialist, Community Health and Chair of Classified Staff Advisory Council
Mark Polatajko - Vice President, Business and Fiscal Affairs

Original Committee

Kimberly Barrett - Vice President, Multicultural Affairs & Community Engagement
George Heddlestone - Vice President, Communications and Marketing
Henry Limouze - Associate Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs
Kym Sellers - Administrative Specialist, Community Health and Chair of Classified Staff Advisory Council
Mark Polatajko - Vice President, Business and Fiscal Affairs
Craig This – Data Analyst 3, Institutional Research
Nova Lasky – Senior Staff Coordinator, Business and Fiscal Affairs

Performance Appraisal Conversation Starter Questions

We are asking that Business Managers collect information from the various offices they assist regarding how the current process is perceived. One way that this can occur is through taking time during a regularly scheduled meeting with an office to discuss these issues. Another would be to arrange a meeting specifically for the purpose of discussing these issues with an office. Yet another approach might be individual meetings with each member of an office. Whatever approach is taken, the following questions can help get the conversation started:

1. In your opinion, what is the purpose of performance appraisals at Wright State University?
2. How does the current performance appraisal process further the work in which you are engaged?
3. What form(s) have you used? Why did you use this form?
4. What about the performance process would you like to see changed?
5. How did you conduct the self-evaluation portion of the performance appraisal process?
6. What types of assistance should be provided to help (a) employees and (b) their supervisors prepare for this process?

There are no right or wrong answers. Your task is to get honest information about how faculty and staff are currently experiencing the process we have in place now.

Thanks in advance for your assistance with this important work.

Performance Appraisal Response Breakdown*

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| Advancement | 2 |
| Boonshoft School of Medicine | 54 |
| Bursar | 3 |
| Business Affairs | 1 |
| Business and Fiscal Managers and MACE | 8 |
| Business Managers and Fiscal Officers | 7 |
| Business Services | 1 |
| College of Education and Human Services | 10 |
| College of Engineering and Computer Science | 1 |
| College of Liberal Arts | 2 |
| College of Science and Math | 1 |
| Enrollment Management | 4 |
| Financial Aid | 4 |
| General Counsel | 1 |
| Graduate School | 1 |
| Institutional Research | 3 |
| Lake Campus | 9 |
| Libraries | 1 |
| Raider Connect | 2 |
| Raj Soin College of Business | 1 |
| Student Affairs | 29 |
| | |
| | 145 |

*Some of these numbers represent groups and not individuals