

Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting March 14, 2011

1:00 – 4:00 PM, One North

AGENDA TOPICS

- Open Discussion
- Performance Review Questions
- Terminology Committee
- Internal Research Committee
- External Research Committee
- Closed Session

MEETING SUMMARY

Open Discussion Topics

- The EAG was asked whether the April Fools issue of Fermilab Today presented a potential problem given the current financial climate at the lab and potential for furloughs.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** The strong consensus was that the April Fools issue of Fermilab Today is enjoyable and a welcome idea, and would hurt morale more if it was not published.
- There was a discussion of the current traffic violation policy instituted in May 2010 that requires a one week suspension without pay for staff members who receive three violations within a specified period. Some staff received violations and citations that they did not deserve, and were not notified until after the 5 day period for appeal. This included one person who does not even own a car. It was noted that the punishment appears harsh and the number of instances where the wrong people get citations is a concern.
- **INFORMATION REQUEST:** The EAG decided it would like to know more about this policy, its implementation, its impact on traffic safety, and understand how citations get sent to the wrong people.
- **ACTION:** The EAG asked that this topic be added to the April agenda and appropriate spokespeople attend from the lab and the committee.

Terminology Committee

- The wrong version of the terminology document was distributed. The committee will distribute a revised document. It was noted that this will remain a living document, and no immediate action was being taken.

Internal Committee

- Draft survey questions were distributed. The committee talked to a number of staff to see what might be appropriate questions. The proposed approach will start by distributing the survey to EAG members using SurveyMonkey or a similar approach. Refinements will be made based on EAG input. The revised survey will then be distributed among peers by EAG members with a broader distribution considered later.
- There was a concern expressed regarding the question pertaining to satisfaction with your current supervisor. Specifically regarding whether responses could be tracked back to a specific person. It was decided that this was not the intention and does not present a real risk.
- **ACTION:** The EAG asked the committee to proceed with the survey approach.

External Committee

- An article was distributed regarding a recent Google project on what makes a good boss, which has strong relevance to the current work of the EAG. Folks noted that these fairly obvious results are useful to the work being done.
- It was noted that the EAG needs to formulate the questions that we want to ask outside experts.
- **INFORMATION REQUEST:** Harry Davis from University of Chicago was identified as a good speaker. Ten Fermilab employees per year go through his leadership development process. The EAG asked to get more information about staff members who have been through that process. The group wants to hear from Harry about the purpose and objectives of the program and his experience here at Fermilab, then bring in staff who have been through the program and see what kind of impact it is having
- **ACTION:** Bruce Chrisman will follow up with Harry Davis to coordinate this.
- **ACTION:** Doug Sarno agreed to follow up with laboratory management expert Wayne Collins.
- It was decided to hold off on any other invitations until we hear from these two.

Performance Review System

Given the current pay freeze, the EAG has discussed the “pay for performance” orientation of the current performance review process and how that affects the transparency and fairness of evaluations. It has been suggested that the pay freeze presents an opportunity to look at the system in more depth and determine whether the concerns about the system are a result of the design or the implementation of the system.

Kay Van Vreede gave a presentation on the performance review system, its implementation and its connection to pay increases. She provided an overview of the process and results of the current system (see presentation at the EAG web site).

The following questions, comments, and suggestions were discussed:

- Question: Is a manager’s performance in conducting performance reviews for their employees taken into account in their own evaluation, reward and promotion? This is generally not a factor in a manager’s own performance review.
- Comment: Most people at the laboratory are rewarded for the project’s performance and not their individual management performance.
- Comment: We have a mentoring system and we should have management skills included in that process. We need to use our existing tools as effectively as possible.
- Comment: A lot of people don’t understand what standards they are being judged against. There is a lack of consistent standards across the lab for people doing the same job.
- Suggestion: Should we change the system to rank people in departments top to bottom? This forced ranking was not viewed as a very good idea since it forces people into arbitrary slots and might not reflect actual performance. There would be a potentially unfair stigma associated with being last.
- Suggestion: It might be helpful to get people to do more complete self-evaluations and conduct peer evaluations for others.
- Suggestion: The lab needs to make a much better effort to describe the terminology and let people know what the different rankings mean. A much stronger focus on communication is needed.
- Suggestion: Every person needs to know that they are part of the performance review process and understand their role and responsibility. We need to create ownership among everyone.
- Comment: At the core of the system we must ensure real honest feedback is being provided to employees. We can’t make everyone feel great and also have the feedback be useful.