

Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting August 25, 2011

9:30 AM – 12:00 PM, One North

August 26, 2011

AGENDA TOPICS

1. Management update
2. Survey results
3. Next Steps for the EAG

MEETING SUMMARY

1) Senior Management Update

- Bruce Chrisman provided an overview. This past month, senior management has been very busy with the contractor assurance issue, a new overall program to put in a system to limit the necessity for other DOE reviews.
- The House has passed the budget bill which includes Fermilab funding at requested levels; the Senate has not yet acted. Regarding LBNE and DUSL, the House has warned DOE not to take on the responsibility for another laboratory. However, Fermilab is still hopeful that LBNE will be a go with or without a full-scale lab at DUSL.
- 44 employees volunteered for the separation of the 100 that were sought. Future actions are yet to be determined. If LBNE and Project X are both to move forward, then additional layoffs may not be necessary. Any future actions will be determined based on budgets, and reviewed as additional information becomes available.
- Harry Davis from the University of Chicago is open to presenting at a future EAG meeting, most likely in October.
- Pier is supportive of the EAG's comments to the recommendations of the Management Curriculum Committee, and will be pursuing an implementation plan.

2) Survey Results

Sam Zeller and Eileen Berman conducted an analysis on the 298 survey responses received (this represents 16% of the 1916 current employees). Response rates ranged between 9% and 26% by division. Eileen presented a series of histograms and theme analysis. These slides are available on the EAG

web site and details are not provided here. Some key points of conversation are noted below.

General Issues

- It was noted that the incidence of managers overseeing small number of staff was seen less than noted in the 2009 focus groups. It was asked if this could be compared with the actual distribution of direct report size at the lab. It was answered that this information is not tracked in an accurate form at the lab.
- A question was asked how problems that are reported to HR repeatedly are handled. The issue is reported to the appropriate level of management and the ultimate resolution rest with that management.
- The data received correlates well with the focus group results.
- There were 135 responses to the last open-ended question, some of which were very specific. The EAG needs to reiterate that the survey was not intended to address individual issues. This data was gathered to look at management as a whole. The EAG members should see these responses and they will be shared at the mid-month meeting. However no copies should be distributed or posted to protect the anonymity of the respondents.
- The EAG should share some of these stories and comments in a way that does not identify individuals but help make managers aware that these types of situations exist. However, it is not the EAGs job to serve as an ombuds. Some folks are not comfortable raising these issues to their supervisors or the 15th floor. There is still a need for an ombuds in the lab. There was an ombuds in the late 70s early 80s for several years and it did not work well, but perhaps a different approach might work better today.
- **Action Item:** The results of the survey should be reported to the senior management group.
- **Action Item:** The results should also be posted at the EAG site. The results were organized to make sure nothing can point back to any specific individual as promised. This will be shared along with a Fermilab Today article. Once it is all tabulated, the survey and raw data will be deleted to make sure no individuals can be identified. Data will be organized to combine some of the smaller reporting groups into like organizations.

Training

- These issues also correlates well with what is already in the training. This reinforces the EAG recommendations that supervisors need to take the training that is available to them.

Employee Feedback

- One key need is how to give positive reinforcement to employees. There should be some help in this area to managers, and the EAG could help in this area to identify programs and ways of rewarding employees, Fermilab

needs to explore free or small cost items to help reward and recognize employees. DOE spells out a certain amount of money for employee reward programs, it all goes to R&R awards (\$100 to \$500) and EPRA (larger awards). R&R awards are nominated directly from supervisors but have to work through the system and can take some months to come through.

- **Action Item:** The EAG should identify a list of ways to reward people within the current system, everyone should do some research about what is possible. These ideas should also include employee-to-employee thanks.

Communication

- Communication and listening show up in these results as a continuing problem.
- Some of the issues are also cultural and the EAG will think about ways to communicate these issues effectively and reinforce positive culture.

Management Culture

- The culture of Fermilab is that we hire smart people and assume that they will figure it out—it is a sink or swim attitude. This relates to an overriding assumption that people don't need training and a lot of the older employees grew up in that system. One major problem is that even those that sink still keep their jobs as supervisors.
- Managers are also technical and generally are motivated by and rewarded only for the technical part, not management.
- Have we explored a system to screen management candidates to make sure they have the skills and behaviors necessary to be a good manager? The lab has explored it but does not have the resources to implement such a program. This would require the commitment to not put people into management positions if they did not pass muster, and that commitment does not appear to exist. We do use behavioral interviewing, especially for outside candidates, and that helps to identify questions that are important, but this is not required and no statistics are kept.
- The bottom line is that we appear to have a lot of long-time poor managers in place, and something has to happen to make these folks adjust or change to become better managers.
- Steps are being taken to address these issues. Fermilab is working on creating a more professional management track and getting away from the rotational approach and getting longer term managers in place.

Summary of Action Items From the Survey Results

- Develop a list of ways to recognize and reward employees.

- Help managers understand what's in it for them to act this way, create some information and materials as a way to help managers work better with employees.
- Identify ideas about how to communicate these issues broadly to the lab.
- Communicate these results back to the lab through Fermilab Today and posting information on the web.
- Share these results with Harry Davis to help him prepare for his presentation. Questions for Harry include: how do these results compare with other places; how Wilson's approach of anyone can do anything, sink or swim, continues to affect the culture of the lab; and, what ideas should be explored to overcome these negative areas of the culture?
- Cross-walk these issues with existing training curriculum to see how well the training addresses the issues.
- Reinforce the existing recommendations of the EAG based on these results.

3) Next Steps for the EAG

- The EAG is having a positive effect, one example is that there is now a map on the 15th floor at WDRS to help folks know where to go to get help.
- It was noted that there are no technicians on the group, mostly office staff or managers, not hourly pay. Rob Plumer who was an electrician, and he stepped down earlier this year. This issue should be explored and addressed as appropriate.
- Membership on the EAG was a two-year commitment. The two-year point will occur in March 2012. The EAG will need to begin discussing how future membership should be constructed and solicited.

4) Additional Topics

- Kay VanVreede noted that WDRS introduced a lot of new initiatives a while back and would like to get feedback from employees about what is working and what else they could do. WDRS would prefer not to conduct a survey and is interested in any ideas from the EAG. Kay will give a short introduction to the initiatives that are underway.

Agenda items for September:

- Feedback to WDRS on their ongoing initiatives
- Ideas for managers to recognize and reward employees