Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting
May 21, 2010 - meeting summary

Issue 1: Dual track for management and technical staff

Pier discussed current initiative to establish dual career tracks for technical and management positions and to create the commensurate rules and salary scales. Key points raised included the following:

- ***Communication.*** This was recently implemented in the Computing Division. There is a lot of interest, but also a lot of confusion in how it was communicated. The communication varied greatly by manager. Overall, there is a need for much greater transparency and access to information.
- ***Access to information***. It was noted that actually the information is available on the web, but many do not realize it or know where to look. In some areas, just getting access to the web is a problem, too many people and not enough computers, and then you would have to be on break to get access at all. Example of good information is the PFX manual for visiting scientists on how to get around the lab, but few know about it and it is not designed for employees.
- ***Orientation***. Members questioned how much of this is covered at orientation and how much can really be absorbed at orientation. Ideas included having a refresher course, getting managers to attend orientation and taping an orientation session so anyone can review it on the web at any time.
- ***Mentoring***. It was noted that Fermilab is very different from other workplaces and folks could benefit from mentors. Right now, if your boss does not know about it, then chances are that you won't get access to it. There are fundamentally different roles between supervisor and mentor. There is a FermiLink card in each new employee packet, but few take advantage of this and a more personal approach is needed.
- ***Access to HR***. It was noted that HR has been visiting different groups to help identify the information that is available and this has been helpful. It was also suggested that HR could embed staff in groups, or assigned staff to different groups.
- ***Management focus on technical issues***. It was noted that many managers are much more focused on their science, than on their management duties. The dual track seems like a fundamental shift in the way the lab is managed, rarely do people leave behind the technical work, and usually the technical job they leave is not backfilled when they become a manager.
- ***Moving between tracks***. It was questioned - how one could move back and forth between tracks if it was decided not to stay a manager or for short-term assignments. If I choose the management rack, will I be seen as out of touch technically? We don't want to create the concept of dead-end jobs.
- ***Training***. It is important to make sure that the management training is clearly tied to the management track. Pier noted that this is a big investment and we need to

do this in steps starting with the larger group managers who then can do a better job with the lower level managers are doing the right things.

Issue 2: Values statement

It was noted that the existing list is a combination of values and recommendations. It is useful input to management as what is important to the EAG as a cross section of lab, but a more focused values statement would also be helpful.

- ***Action Item***. Jamie Blowers and Sandra Charles agreed to work together on a distilled set of values for presentation to the group at the next meeting.

Issue 3: Performance appraisal process

A discussion was held to identify the appropriate role of the EAG in improving the performance appraisal process and how to use the current cycle of the review to gather information for future discussion.

It was noted that the group wanted to get as much factual information as possible to inform the conversation. Often assumptions do not line up with reality. For example, Jamie Blowers noted that data showed that the majority of promotions over the past five years in the Technical Division were to technical positions and not management positions.

Some key issues and questions identified included the following:

- How are goals being developed among employees of a similar job type, are people being held to completely different standards and expectations?
- How are things achieved, how are things measured, is there too much individual supervisor discretion?
- People want to be rated based on how they are actually doing.
- There is a challenge to inspire when people believe that they are working extremely hard just to do “fine.” Is there a language issue with terms like “fully competent?” How do people get to “the truth?”
- What is the purpose of the system-if it is to provide honest feedback than we are handicapped, if it is to manage fair distribution of limited pay then it works well?
- The best reward is recognition in front of peers.
- How many people are being told that their review is constrained by the salary issue and that they should have been rated higher?
- Are people being judged against their goals, to what degree are goals quantitative or not, are we playing games with goals?
- What are good goals? Are they being set consistently across the board?
- What about when our goals change throughout the year, and they always change throughout the year?
- How much do our goals follow us through the year? What about more regular check-ins throughout the year?

Pier noted that the EAG could be very useful in providing a more complete view of what is happening throughout the lab, what works well does not work well, and how people perceive things. Also important is how well we are writing goals as an organization, what works and not. Employees should understand how they are doing and getting constructive feedback and fair compensation. It is also important to have a defensible system for government review purposes (DOE certifies the compensation system).

The EAG agreed that it did wish to play a role and would discuss appropriate data-gathering questions and activities at its next meeting.

Action items

- Presentation at the June meeting about how the performance review process is supposed to work
- Identify future meeting dates for the next few months
- Jamie Blowers and Sandra Charles will develop a set of values for presentation to the group at the next meeting