Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting
November 12, 2010 - Meeting Summary

1. Miscellaneous Issues

- **Steering committee**. The steering committee is meeting on a fairly regular basis to help plan EAG activities. All EAG members are welcome to steering committee meetings and announcements of future meetings will be distributed.
- **Website**. The web site is a good place to record EAG documents and summaries, we need to better organize the site and communicate to all employees.
- **NEW COMMITTEE: Communication**. Aria and Eileen volunteered work on the website and communication to employees. The EAG should explore a more visible place on the web so that employees can find the information more easily. A story will be placed in *Fermilab Today* to announce the website resources.
- **Name**. There is another EAG at the lab, the experimental astrophysics group. We should spell out employee advisory group whenever we communicate.

2. Performance Review

- The revised recommendations document is not complete. The committee will distribute it next week for review for final action in December.

3. Voluntary Separation Offer

The recent announcement of the VSO was discussed and several questions asked of the senior managers present.

- Employment at the lab is now at the lowest level of employment since the early 1980s. Supporting information attached.
- It was asked how and why some people came back to lab after taking the last buyout. How does this make sense financially? The lab found out that it had eliminated some positions that it still needed plus the Recovery Act money created a lot of new need for positions.
- How are we using these lessons learned and can we get a summary of those lessons so that we can avoid the misinformation that is out there and get good information out to employees? It was agreed that a short column or FAQ would help and that a lot of this information had already been produced and was on the web.

- It was noted that there were few questions at the all hands meeting, and it did not appear that the real hard questions were asked. It was noted that there was no advance warning (DOE rules required that it not be announced earlier), so perhaps there was not much time for people to formulate questions.
- One question that has not been clearly answered is what happens if the lab does not get the 50 volunteers being sought.
- The lab has just hired a lot of new people and has many pending offers out. Why were we doing that in this economy? Certain skills are needed now and we have significant shortage and can not execute some of our future projects. The overall skill mix is shifting as we complete some projects and begin new projects. A lab this size will always need to be hiring in some positions and many key positions cannot go unfilled as people leave.
- A lot of the people we have brought in are not permanent employees, this should be made clear.
- A manager noted that they were completely unprepared to respond to their people's questions, and did not have the needed information or guidance from senior management. Information was ultimately found on the web, but they were caught off guard.
- It sounds like each division was given the prerogative to handle the invitations on their own.
- Some employees are doing jobs that are different than their actual job descriptions so some people doing the same job are actually treated differently and this can cause problems in these sorts of circumstances.
- It appears that so much of people's questions are answered on the web, and this needed to be communicated more effectively.
- It was agreed that an announcement from Monday onward will appear in *Fermilab Today* that will share this link.
- All hands email today with FAQ might also be useful.
- Some people don't have regular internet access, we also need to identify how we can help them.
- Pier noted that the VSO is aimed at trying to stabilize the lab now so we don't have to do something more drastic later.
- Managers needed to be better prepared and the best way to communicate this is face to face. Managers need to be encouraged to meet with folks directly and given better tools and information to have those conversations.
- One manager pointed out that they were not given the list of their employees who were going to receive VSO offers. They had to ask their division head for it.
- It might have been more effective for lab management to meet with division leaders, who then should have then met with their managers to make sure everyone had the same information.

- Pier and Young-Kee used the time that the EAG was in small group conversations to communicate with all division managers to help improve the overall communication process.

3. Management at the Laboratory

The steering committee shared the draft management document and received the following comments:

- There are one or two extreme statements in the draft (for example the use of all-inclusive words) that should be adjusted to be more accurate.
- They are encouraged and allowed to pursue their organization's goal with considerable freedom and flexibility, and little to no management training or accountability for anything except technical results. This is not really true as managers have a lot of other areas where they are held accountable.
- Need to be careful not to make any statements that will undermine the credibility of the whole document.
- There are many things in the APS report that the laboratory just does not agree with and we need to be careful about using them. We did the focus groups to get a much richer picture of what is happening at the lab. The APS report was based on a very limited self-selected sample of employees on a single day.

The steering committee noted that this whole discussion is largely framed by culture: particularly how we define the approaches and behaviors we are seeking from management and how to create the right system of knowledge, skills, incentives and disincentives to get the management we are seeking.

The EAG broke into four small dialogue groups to discuss changes to the document according to the following questions:

- Have we articulated the situation sufficiently? What additions/revisions should be made?
- Have we defined the problem accurately so that we understand the EAG's goal?
- Are these the right outcomes for EAG work? Are there other desirable/appropriate outcomes?
- What's next? Define the information, knowledge and dialogue needed to make informed and effective recommendations.

Highlights of group reports:

Group 1

- General concepts and description are good, may need some more detail on desired outputs from the EAG.

- Rewrite some of the statements to make sure they are accurate and that we use strong statements purposefully.
- Management now fully understands how to do things in a safe manner and all employees understand what safety means. We need to find the parallel wording and structure for good management.

Group 2

- This is such a large issue, we need more clarity of the EAG goal, and to flesh out the outcomes more.
- We have many different kinds of managers, how do we include them all in our recommendations?
- We should have a more positive tone and focus on benefits of the outcome.
- The description of the future state should come from a positive orientation.
- Our phrasing might not be obvious to other employees at the lab, so we need to make sure we are being clear.
- Wherever we post it, we need to be clear what this is—a beginning point for our discussions.
- We need to collect more facts as we move forward and publish them for everyone to see.
- We need to promote the overall benefit for Fermilab.

Group 3

- Lots of the same issues as the first two groups
- We need a more positive tone, and to be careful about absolute statements as the lab is very diverse.
- Do we need to define how prevalent this is? What additional data do we need?
- Be more concrete about the realistic affects of this change, we may be a little optimistic at some points.
- We need to address the situation so that employees do not feel helpless, promote more employee empowerment, and provide sources for help and information.

Group 4

- Agreed with most of what has been said.
- We should strive for better than an acceptable work environment.
- We need to be careful to use inadvertently extreme phrasing.

Pier said that if we want to change the culture we need to motivate managers to move in the right direction. We need to think about all the pressures they are under, and identify the sets of arguments to make positive movements as a whole. The stick and carrot approach only goes so far, it is more important to frame the type of environment we are seeking and how that will help us as a laboratory and the individual incentives for managers to change. The employee

perspective is very important and the EAG can play a very important role in helping management understand how to best help managers be more effective. Recognize that this will take time, and we will also need to help management manage expectations about the pace of change