

**Unclassified Professional Task Force
Report and Recommendations
05/02/11**

Introduction and Background

Kansas State University's workforce consists of approximately 1,500 faculty, 1,700 unclassified professional staff and 1,500 classified staff. Clear policies and procedures related to position management, rank, evaluation, promotion, and career development exist for faculty positions and for classified staff positions. However, policies and procedures are not as clear for unclassified professional positions. The unclassified professional positions may or may not fit within existing university policy and procedures that were written with faculty or classified staff in mind.

Currently, addressing issues associated with unclassified professional staff usually occurs at the department level because university guidelines do not exist or if a guideline does exist, it is difficult to interpret. This, along with the historical decentralized organizational structure, has led to many inconsistencies in job titles, position responsibilities, pay, performance evaluation structures, and career development and promotion opportunities. According to the FY2010 Exit Interview Results Report compiled by the Office of Planning and Analysis the factors influencing resignations of at least 50% of unclassified professionals who left between July 2005 and June 2010 were (1) no or few opportunities for advancement/promotion and (2) non-competitive salary while at KSU. These inconsistencies in managing unclassified professional staff and the desire to retain high quality, high performing individuals speaks to the need for action.

Problem Statement

The KSU unclassified professional workforce does not have well-written standardized policies and procedures or identified best practices for position management, performance management, appropriate salary structure or pay plan, diversity in the workplace, promotion opportunities and career development/growth, and methods for greater retention rates.

Action Needs

The Task Force identified four major needs to address the problem. By addressing these needs KSU will create a strategy for attracting and retaining top performing unclassified professionals.

1. Clearly define unclassified professional positions
2. Clearly define unclassified professional performance management system
3. Develop and/or clarify guidelines and best practices for recruitment and retention of excellent unclassified professionals
4. Develop guidelines and best practices for professional development and career growth for unclassified professionals

Recommendations

1. *The Task Force recommends that administration identify an office and appropriate resources to develop university policies and procedures that address the actions needed as identified above.*
2. *The Task Force recommends that this Task Force continue their work by serving as an advisory group to the office and persons identified to develop and/or clarify unclassified professional policies and procedures. (All members of Task Force are willing to participate in work associated with any tasks as needed or requested.)*

ADDENDUM

Additional information related to four identified needs

1. Clearly define unclassified professional positions

A position description is the foundation of every position. Prior to the hiring process a strong position description for the position that is being recruited for should be developed. Once developed, the appropriate classification category and title should be assigned. The current job code/job title process can be improved by developing consistency and standardization of job codes/job titles for unclassified professionals.

Appropriate position descriptions must be developed and kept updated for all unclassified professional positions to ensure equity in position titles and compensation. Along with this a central repository must be identified for housing official unclassified position descriptions.

Objective: Develop standardization for unclassified professional positions across campus by defining job groups/categories/titles

Strategy 1: Development of position descriptions that do not limit employees, but allows employees to stretch their experience, develop skills and ability to contribute to the organization.

Action 1: Job questionnaire and analysis

Action 2: Collection/establishment of position descriptions of all unclassified positions

Strategy 2: Careful design of a position structure that blends the skills and responsibilities of employees with the goal of successfully carrying out the organization's mission or program.

Action 1: Job families/categories

Action 2: Position titles

Action 3: Assignment of titles to positions commonly used in higher education in order to facilitate internal and external salary studies.

2. Clearly define unclassified professional performance management

The purpose of the annual performance evaluation process includes assessing, guiding, improving, and recognizing employee performance, resulting in effective achievement of organizational and individual goals. A clearly defined process for performance evaluation should be coupled with training made available to supervisors of unclassified staff. A set of principles, guidelines and/or best practices for unclassified professional evaluation and development of performance is highly desired. Such guidelines might include:

- 1) Cultivating a high performing organizational workforce of unclassified professionals through performance evaluation and development that engages the entire organization, is appropriate to the nature of the work, recognizes and rewards exemplary performance and addresses substandard performance.
- 2) Commitment to a performance evaluation process that incorporates candid discussion about performance with the ability to recognize and reward outstanding performance and well defined procedures for addressing poor performance.
- 3) Commitment to responsible investments in unclassified professionals through professional development, education, and training directed at maximizing productivity, enhancing employee personal

and professional competencies, supporting unclassified professionals as they seek new career opportunities and generating a succession of leaders prepared and able to lead the organization in the future.

4) Hold leaders, administrators, and supervisors accountable for actively supporting and engaging in the performance evaluation and development process in a fair and equitable manner and for ensuring the alignment of employee and organizational goals and priorities.

Objective: Develop standardization and best practices for unclassified performance review and evaluations

Strategy 1: Development of a plan that assists in the standardization of performance reviews and performance management

Action 1: Review existing processes and establish standard metrics for planning and evaluation processes

Action 2: Identify best practices for setting employee goals and reviewing employee performance

3. Development and/or clarify guidelines and best practices for recruitment and retention of excellent unclassified professionals

A consistent and standardized hiring process must be in place to ensure a quality and successful search for an unclassified professional position. KSU is making strides in developing a strong and detailed pre-search and search committee process to ensure excellence and diversity in employees.

It is important to allow for promotion of employees in recognition of demonstrated ability, experience, technical knowledge and contribution to the department, college and university. A promotion is defined as moving to a job in a higher job classification and higher job responsibility. Opportunities for promotion and recognition are vital to employee motivation and commitment to the organization. In order for a promotion process to be put in place job title categories must be standardized and well-defined. Promotion opportunities exist for the classified staff and for the faculty at KSU. A promotion mechanism for unclassified professionals seems appropriate and consistent with faculty promotion opportunities.

Incentives and awards are another way of recognizing excellence and exemplary contributions to the organization. The President has recently established the President's Award for Excellence for Unclassified Professionals. Other possible reward and recognition programs should also be considered and developed or expansion of this new program.

To maintain high quality employee performance and productivity in the long term the University must invest resources in recruiting diverse candidates and have a plan in place to retain these employees.

Objectives: Address issues related to pay (hiring and adjustments); address diversity in the workforce; address recognition and performance; propose additional benefit options for consideration

Strategy 1: Identify methods for centralized support of the unclassified recruitment processes in order to improve recruitment strategies and effectiveness.

Action 1: Identify and implement systems and procedures to assist managers in improving the recruitment process

Strategy 2: Identify strategies for managers to use in improving unclassified professional employee retention.

Action 1: Identify tools and programs to assist managers in improving retention rate

Action 2: Identify best practices for employee retention

Strategy 2: Development of possible recognition, incentive and award programs for unclassified professionals that link with the university's mission.

Action 1: Identify tools and programs for employee recognition

Action 2: Identify tools and programs for employee incentives

Action 3: Identify tools and programs for employee awards

Strategy 3: Identify strategies to assist in workforce diversity among unclassified professional within the university.

Action 1: Identify tools, programs and best practices to assist in workforce diversity

4. Development of guidelines and best practices for professional development and career growth for unclassified professionals

Career development/growth investment based on individual employee needs will also ensure successful retention. Competitive salaries, promotion opportunities and consistency across colleges in managing unclassified positions are also important factors in retention strategies.

Objective: Identify tools, programs, and/or practices for promotion and advancement

Strategy 1: Establish a career development policy that allows unclassified professionals to build productive and satisfying careers while contributing to the achievement of the university's mission.

Action 1: Identify tools and programs to support employees and supervisor in creating and implementing employee career development plans

Action 2: Identify best practices for employee career development

Task Force Information

Task Force Charge

The Provost and Faculty Senate President charge the Unclassified Professional Task Force with developing and recommending a working document that clearly defines unclassified professional positions with well-written standardized policies and procedures as well as best practices for managing these positions to ensure excellence in performance, recognition of stellar performance and contribution, diversity in the workplace, career development/growth and greater retention rates.

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Documentation and Information

All documentation and information reviewed, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes are housed in a K-State online classroom.