

**Who is Behind the Title?**  
**Professionals at the University at Albany**

A Report to the Provost on

**Who** the UA professionals are,

**Why** we work here, and

**What** we recommend to be done to improve recruiting and retaining us.

By

**The Career, Leadership, and University Excellence (CLUE)**

**Professional Staff Retention Group**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**July 2011**

**Handout for June 22, 2011 meeting**

## **Executive Summary**

Our CLUE group came together to address the Provost’s Charge for us to think and learn what we could do better to recruit and, more importantly, retain professionals at UA. We put together a group of professionals from across the campuses, across divisions, across employers, and across titles to see what we could find out why professionals like working at UA, what the obstacles are to a better work environment at UA, and what the solutions are to overcoming these obstacles. We did demographic research, conducted a campus-wide survey, conducted two focus groups, and researched best practices in academe as well as the public and private sectors. In the course of our work, we came up with many possible recommendations, but the combined results of the survey, focus groups, and our research on best practices led us to focus on those we consider to be the most important—what we came to call “the Big Eight.”

What we discovered is that most staff like working at UA. Many are alumni, often having earned degrees while employed here. Salary matters but so do other factors such as location. There is a strong desire for professional growth and for recognition of work and skills as defined by an administrative and operational context. Staff need resources to do their jobs—and often that does not mean money but instead time and knowledge. Yes, there are obstacles but there are also solutions. And, we found within our own committee and within the university focus group of professionals, a readiness to work for change even though we recognize implementation will take time. Those items we focused on as the most significant require not so much financial resources as institutional determination to change how it operates and what it deems important.

### **The Big Eight Recommendations**

Our group arrived at a set of recommendations following a process developed by the Center for Technology in Government and used by our group under the direction of one of our members, Donna Canestraro. (This process, known as Affinity Clustering, is fully described in Appendix B of the Focus Group’s full report.) We summarized our results into Eight Themes and from there determined our top recommendations, the Big Eight. A full list of the recommendations can be found in the final section of the report.

#### **The Big Eight Recommendations are:**

- Provide Mentoring for Professionals
- Tell/remind people that UA is a good place to work by developing a marketing plan specifically aimed at professionals
- Provide systematic and effective new employee orientation
- Develop and implement supervisor training
- Create a “high potential program” for select professionals to develop leadership skills
- Offer the option of a compressed or flexible work week
- Explore physical space design to meet the needs of professionals
- Conduct systematic and effective exit interviews

**Our committee’s final recommendation is that the next step be to create an action plan so that when we look back five years from now, we can point to positive change for professionals at UA.**

## **Who are Professionals at UA?**

We thought it would be helpful to provide some definitions and context since we learned during the course of our committee work that often much is not known or realized about professionals at UA. Here are some points to remember:

- Professionals at UA hold all types of titles such as Assistant to the Chair, Purchasing Agent, Research Administrator, Architect, Center director, Coach, Research Project Assistant, and Senior Programmer.
- We work in all divisions of UAlbany.
- We work on all three campuses as well as at off-campus locations.
- Some of us are NYS employees, some of us are Research Foundation employees, and some of us work for other entities at the university such as University Auxiliary Services.
- Who our employer is (i.e., NYS or RF or UAS) determines whether or not we are unionized and determines what our work rules are including opportunities for professional development and promotion.
- Some of us are left completely out of some university categories and activities because we are not NYS employees.
- Although we are grouped with “faculty” as defined by SUNY, we are different in our primary roles and responsibilities.
- Some of us are supervised by faculty and some of us are supervised by professionals.
- Our work year is a calendar year, not an academic year.
- Some of us teach but most of us do not.
- Many of us are alumni.
- Many of us have worked here for years—sometimes decades.
- We are loyal supporters of the university—no matter who our employer is.

We know a great deal about the university and how it works and we know how to make it hum administratively and operationally.

Committee members:

Nan Carroll, Office of the Dean of the College of Computing and Information, PACE, and the Center for Legislative Development, chair

Daniel White, College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering, former co-chair

Irene Andrea, Department of History

Janice Bogan, Office of the Vice President for Research

Patrizia Caiazza, Office of the Registrar

Donna Canestraro, Center for Technology in Government

Livia da Silva, Student Financial Services

Kathy Gersowitz, Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Yenisel Gulatee, Advisement Services Center/Undergraduate Studies

William Hedberg, Office of the Provost

Paula Kaloyeros, Sponsored Funds Financial Management

Zina Lawrence, Office of the Dean of the School of Business

Diana Mancini, Office of the Dean of the School of Criminal Justice

Dayna Maniccia, Center for Health Workforce Studies

Debernee Privott, University in the High School

Caitlin Reid, Office of the Dean of the School of Public Health

Crystal Rogers, Office of the Dean of the School of Social Welfare

Lynne Shultis, Human Resources Management

Barbara Wilkinson, Department of Political Science

Marlene Williams, Department of Geography & Planning

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