

# **Work Force Response to Environmental Assessment: Executive Summary**

**University of Nebraska Medical Center**

**Cultural Competency Development  
Executive Steering Committee**

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## UNMC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the University of Nebraska Medical Center's (UNMC) cultural competence initiative is to develop a place where all people feel good about being here. Cultural Competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes (Davis and Donald, 1997). In a culturally competent organization, steps are taken and measurements are made to determine what factors influence employees' success at an organization and what factors at an organization may be perceived as barriers to success. This is important because employees who feel that they are able to rise to the highest level of their potential become the recruiters for the organization. Their satisfaction is transmitted to people in the community who may become future employees, students, or research participants. Conversely, dissatisfied employees and students may transmit another message □ □one that no amount of advertising and promotion will erase. For example, dissatisfied employees may communicate a message that only some are welcome at UNMC and only some will succeed. Sustained negative communication of UNMC may then result in current and potential employers and educators perceiving UNMC as a last resort for employment and education rather than one of first choice.

In light of the aforementioned, measuring the results of UNMC's programming efforts are critical to the credibility of UNMC's cultural competence initiative and are essential for benchmarking growth and for developing future programming that positively impacts UNMC's bottom line. In January of 2001, University of Nebraska Medical Center's office of Community Partnership assembled a diverse group of department chairs, senior faculty members, administrators, physicians, human resource professionals and an external consultant to reflect and share ideas, review historical information, and design a plan to move the University from a campus that embraces diversity to one that endeavors to become a culturally competent organization. Over the course of several months a strategic plan was designed to: 1) assess the readiness of the organization to address cultural competence as an integral part of its ability to function well in today's society; 2) determine the present organizational climate regarding cultural competence; and 3) to design a plan to facilitate the University's achievement of being a culturally competent organization. While there were some who expressed concern about an initiative to embrace cultural competence, based on past similar activities, the committee's interactions culminated in a renewed vision of the University of Nebraska Medical Center as a place that respects individuals for their cultures, contributions and points of view as well fostering an environment where all people feel good about being here.

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Between January and June of 2002, an environmental assessment survey instrument was made available to all employees through direct contact of the investigators or by a department champion. The questionnaire used to survey staff, students and faculty was constructed on campus. The content and format derived from benchmarking data from corporations and academic medical centers who work on cultural competence and diversity initiatives (such as 2001 Project DARE: Diversity Awareness through Resources and Education, University of California, Berkeley; A Guide to Culture Audits by John Hutcherson and Terri Kruzan from the American Institute for

Managing Diversity; and Omaha Women's Fund of Greater Omaha October 2000 "What Women Want at Work," Women and Leadership: Executive Summary; as well as consultation with UNMC Cultural Competence Development Steering Committee members. The questionnaire was composed of fifty-five (55) items covering the following areas: employee background characteristics; general climate on campus; organizational climate; employee sense of achievement; management and supervision; types of interactions that are experienced, valued and appreciated by employees; and issues of equality and fairness. Some of the questions had pre-existing categories from which to respond while others allowed respondents to write narrative responses.

### **SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

In January 2002, the Office of Community and Multicultural Affairs began a series of forums where the questionnaires were administered. The purpose and philosophy of the process was explained and included the following:

*The University of Nebraska Medical Center identified in its 2001 - 2004 Strategic Plan a goal to "Create a Culturally Competent Organization." The first directive of this goal is to "improve the organizational climate to support cultural competence. It is important to provide a quantitative and qualitative overview of issues facing the staff and faculty of UNMC. Baseline data on the current organizational climate must be established and the data will be used to develop strategies for improving the climate and to track the organization's progress over the next five years.*

Employees were ensured about the confidentiality of their responses and completed the questionnaires before departing the forum. A total of 68 presentations were made during departmental staff meetings or meetings called to facilitate completion of the instrument. Letters and questionnaires were mailed to employees at College of Nursing sites at Lincoln, Kearney and Scottsbluff and faculty and staff participated in the forum via satellite.

A unique feature of the overall effort included a set of interview results with the members of the Chancellor's Council, using a combined Emotional Intelligence Leadership and Mission/Vision/Values approach. This approach revealed how the UNMC vision consistently resonates throughout the campus and served as a critical role in facilitating participation in the environmental assessment by employees from their departments.

### **SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

A total of 2455 completed questionnaires were completed, for an overall response rate of 75.24%. Participation by department ranged from 64% to 100%. Such a response rate is truly exceptional for a survey of this type and magnitude. For example, when UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute conducted a similar survey in 1990, their response rate was just under 30%.

Sixty-six percent of the respondents were female and 32% were male; 2% did not respond to the question. Most (82%) respondents were White (non-Hispanic) followed by respondents who identified as Other (3.5%), Black (non-Hispanic; 3.2%), and Hispanic/Latino (2.3%). Persons from Asian (2.1%) and Pacific Islander (1.2%) ethnic backgrounds also participated. Twenty-five percent of the respondents were between age 42 and 49 with an equal amount (20%) falling between age 50-57 and 34-41. Seventeen-percent were age 26-33 and 7% were age 58-66. The youngest age group fell between 18-25 (5%) and 2% were over 66 years.

Most (21%) of the respondents were with the University for 11 to 20 years, followed by those (17%) who were with UNMC for over 1 year but less than 3 years. Fifteen percent were with the agency for 3 to 5 years and 15% less than 1 year, with 12% being there over 20 years. Many of the respondents completed a Bachelor's Degree (24%), 21% completed an M.D; 15% completed a Master's Degree, and 12% completed a Ph.D. Less than 1% did not graduate from high school. Most respondents (66%) were full time employed staff, with 27% being faculty and 4% students. Twenty-two percent earned a present salary between \$25,000 and \$36,000; 20% ranged between \$36,000- \$48,000; with 15% of the respondents' salary ranging between \$18,000 and \$25,000. Six percent earned less than \$18,000 with 9% ranging over \$110,000. Sixty-two percent of the respondents were in non-supervisory positions with more than half (57%) of the respondents involved in some level of direct care/patient contact.

## HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

Quantifiable closed-ended responses from the Environmental Assessment are provided below. Please note that open-ended, narrative responses have been reviewed, and while highlights will appear in this summary a more detailed review of the comments will be reported in the full report; all results will be available to UNMC employees via a variety of strategies delineated in the final section of this executive summary.

### General Climate on Campus

A series of questions were assessed to gauge respondents' feelings about the general climate on campus. In particular, respondents provided their feelings regarding fitting in on campus and feeling welcome on campus; 89% said they fit in; 5% did not fit in and 6% provided no response. In terms of feeling welcome on campus, 87% felt welcome; 4% didn't feel welcome and 9% did not provide a response. Similarly, 78% of the respondents felt UNMC is a family-friendly organization, with 9% disagreeing (13% provided no response).

Employees were also asked how safe they felt while alone on campus at night. Fifty-seven percent felt safe; 23% did not feel safe.

In reference to UNMC utilizing employees' strengths, most (82%) employees agreed that UNMC utilizes their strengths, while 10% indicated that they don't believe their unique strengths are utilized (8% did not respond). Most respondents (64%) also indicated that they felt like a very effective UNMC team member; 18% felt effective and 6% did not feel very effective (13% provided no response).

Seventy-two percent of the respondents indicated that UNMC is a place where women can advance (72%), relative to other places that they know; 10% disagreed and 18% provided no response. Overwhelmingly, written comments reflected a need for clear feedback, positive reinforcement, respect, mentoring and a dedicated effort to place women higher in the hierarchy.

Overall, most (62%) of survey respondents felt favorable about UNMC moving in the right direction when compared to 7% who felt less favorable (31% did not provide a response). However, although 48% indicated that UNMC is good at what it does; 44% disagreed and 8% did not provide a response. Such responses indicate room for growth and validate the implementation of this environmental assessment as one strategy toward developing UNMC as a place where all people feel good about being here.

## Organizational Climate

When asked to indicate what attracted them to UNMC, 36% attributed it to great salary and benefit package with 28% indicating that it was the people that were already at UNMC. Others (26%) indicated that it was the best job available and that job security was also a contributing factor (25%). Reputation (23%), location (22%) and job advancement opportunities (21%) also proved to be important. The reason less attributed to their attraction to UNMC was having family and friends in the area (17%).

Similarly, there was also diversity in the reasons stated for staying at UNMC. That is not surprising when taking into account the vast ranges of years (less than one year to over 20 years) in which employees have stayed with UNMC. Forty-four percent attributed it to their commitment to work, with 41% of respondents staying because they enjoy the salary and benefits. Good supervision/management (31%) and good facilities/resources (28%) were also important factors that contributed to sustained employment at UNMC. Yet others valued the fair treatment (26%) they received and having an opportunity to advance (24%). Six percent indicated that there was nothing that encouraged respondents to stay with UNMC. However, 29% wrote that the *people* at UNMC (coworkers and leaders), the University's commitment to excellence, and a diversity of opportunities were the reasons they stayed at UNMC.

In spite of the reasons attributed to sustained employment with UNMC, 49% of respondents have thought about leaving UNMC at least one point in time. When respondents were asked to explain what was going on at the time they considered leaving, 22% said it was due to low salary & benefits; poor supervision/management (17%), and other non-specified reasons (16%). An equal percent (17%) attributed their consideration to leave to lack of fairness, with an equal number (11%) to lack of promotion or opportunity. In particular, 13% indicated that UNMC employees are generally not treated fairly and equally. Four percent didn't get along with people and 2% attributed their consideration to leave due to personal problems.

The majority (72%) of respondents did not report experiencing any type of discrimination during employment at UNMC, however 21% did (7% provide no response). Of those who experienced discrimination, the majority specified Other with gender discrimination (9%) and race discrimination (4%) experienced as well. Other types of discrimination delineated include: age (3%); color (2%); national origin (2%); religion (2%); disability (1%); marital status (1%); sexual orientation (1%) and veteran status (less than 1%). It is important to underscore the significance of these factors and their context given that they can greatly influence a person's experience and decision to stay at UNMC. Written comments reflected that women and minorities get enough special help and should just accept their situation.

Assuming that progress was yet to be made in providing equal opportunity for all employees at UNMC at the time the assessment was implemented, respondents were asked to rate their sense of optimism; 36% of the respondents indicated that they were neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Forty seven percent were pessimistic, 29% were somewhat optimistic and 18% were very optimistic. Nine percent were somewhat pessimistic with an additional 5% who indicated they were very pessimistic. Comments on pessimism reflected that the University is slow to change, that budget cuts stifle further development and that favoritism is still an issue. Of those that were optimistic, comments reflected an overall positive environment where people are valued, that

cultural awareness and cultural competence is a priority, and that UNMC leaders are committed and dedicated to fair and equal treatment.

When asked to rate their feelings about whether UNMC is already moving in the right direction, 60% felt more favorable with 25% falling in the middle and 7% feeling less favorable to the idea (31% did not provide any response).

When asked whether they thought that their opinions in this survey were representative of most people at UNMC, 35% said yes, 8% said no with 57% of respondent providing no response. (This high non-response rate may be due to the item being almost last on the survey, which may contribute to survey fatigue.)

### **Perceived Ability to Succeed at UNMC**

Survey respondents were also asked about their perception of their own success at UNMC. Seventy-seven percent of them considered themselves successful. Four percent didn't consider themselves successful at UNMC; 10% didn't know; and 9% did not provide any response. In assessing what may have contributed to their success, 72% stated that it was because they have done their job well; 65% attributed it to getting along with people; 57% said they were successful because they were given the responsibility and because they have worked hard (52%). Education was cited by 43% of the respondents and the least (11%) cited reason for success was have been given diverse projects (21%) and Other (11%; an open ended, narrative question).

An equal percentage (3%) of respondents who did not think of themselves as successful attributed it to not playing office politics or being able to provide other experiences at UNMC. Two percent expressed they were not given a chance to succeed with an equal number saying that it was due to inexperience or not being qualified; not getting along with the supervisor or management; being discriminated against; or not being promoted.

To learn more about respondents' perception of contributing factors to their success at UNMC, they were asked if there was anything that kept them from contributing all they believe they could do to their jobs; 58% of them said No. Of the 42% who said, Yes, lack of support/resources (21%) was the most cited reason, followed by lack of rewards/incentives (18%) and lack of time (16%). Lack of communication (14%), low moral (12%), and poor supervision/management (11%) were also contributing factors. Fewer respondents considered favoritism, poor health, skill level and lack of interest in current position as factors that kept them from contributing all they could do to their jobs well.

When asked about their feelings regarding being successful at work and having any unwritten rules that employees are expected to follow, 56% felt there were unwritten rules that included the following: 1) following the chain of command (30%); 2) being okay to say I don't know or I don't understand (24%); 3) putting in extra time at work (23%); and (4) having help available that is asked for (21%). Other factors revolved around not being vocal, playing office politics, following instructions and being punctual.

In light of these experiences, additional open-ended, narrative questions were included to afford respondents an opportunity to provide recommendations about what can be done to help employees

do better and advance at UNMC. This information has been reviewed and incorporated into future activities that are delineated in the Strategies section of this report.

## **Management and Supervision**

Additional questions were included in the survey to learn about the types of interactions that are experienced and valued by UNMC employees that are related to management and supervision.

Mentoring. Forty-seven percent of the respondents indicated they had a mentor or coach to help with their job; 49% didn't and 4% did not provide a response. Of those who indicated they had a mentor most (37%) found the mentor/coach extremely or very helpful; 10% found them somewhat helpful with 3% finding them to be a little or not helpful all (50% did not elaborate further). There were comments about mentoring throughout the responses that reflected a value of the mentoring process and suggestions for more and better mentoring opportunities.

Sharing Information. The majority of respondents felt they could share work-related or personal problems with their current supervisor, however, to varying degrees. For example, 35% felt they could share all problems, with 32% feeling they could share most problems and 33% sharing some problems. Seven percent indicated they could never do this. The identified issues that could be discussed with supervisors are: 1) work related (90%); health-related (61%); family-related (52%); personal issues (38%) and include other issues that were not identified (41%). Open-ended, narrative questions allowed respondents to elaborate on why they felt they couldn't share with supervisors and why it was unacceptable to discuss some of the issues identified above with supervisors. Notably, comments as to why employees do not share information with supervisors were that they feared the supervisor would not keep the information confidential; the supervisor didn't want to hear what they had to say; and that they may be considered less valuable or competent. Another frequently cited reason was that the supervisor was always away.

When asked to identify some examples of work-related issues that have been discussed with their current supervisor, 48% discussed lack of staff performance; 39% discussed personality conflicts; and 18% talked about lack of opportunities with their current supervisor. Other work-related issues they shared included favoritism/discrimination (9%); use of objectionable language (6%); sexual harassment (3%); sexism (3%); racism (2%) and EEOC grievances (2%).

Informal Feedback. Of the 54% of respondents who believed they were getting informal feedback about how they are doing on the job, most (51%) found it to be very or mostly useful; 27% found it somewhat useful and 6% found it barely or not useful. Twenty percent did not believe they were getting informal feedback with 26% giving no response.

Rewards & Recognition. Participants were asked to think about the type of employee rewards and recognition they received as an UNMC employee. In particular, respondents were asked to give consideration to what their immediate supervisor did when something went wrong or when something went really well at UNMC. Three themes arose when supervisors responded to something going wrong; the first was a response type that was more interactive and constructive, identified as supervisors taking a calm, rational approach (55%); calling a meeting to resolve the issue (32%); taking control over the situation (31%) and preventing the recurrence by direct involvement (15%). The second was a response type that was not as constructive and perhaps less



engaged; it included supervisors who solved the situation superficially and temporarily (16%); those who passed the buck (7%), blamed someone else (6%); blew up (5%) or panicked (3%). Lastly, others said supervisors did nothing (19%) when something went wrong which implies no action at all.

When asked what supervisors did when things went really well, 19% also said supervisors did nothing. However, 60% indicated that their supervisor gave positive feedback; 29% said supervisors expect things to go well, with 20% indicating that their supervisor recognized and reported the success to upper management. Some supervisors were reported to give rewards (17%), while others were described as taking the credit themselves (5%) or relaxing (4%) when the situation arises. Written comments reflected a need for more flexibility for employees with families, and an improved cost structure for the day-care center.

## STRATEGIES

In order to sustain the positive experiences shared by many UNMC employees and also increase the number of persons who feel good about being at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, the following initial strategies will be implemented and sustained over time.

**Focus Groups:** Focus Groups will be conducted in the near future (May, 2003) to allow employees to discuss their perceptions and experiences or obstacles, issues, and conditions noted in the environmental survey. Participants will be asked to join focus groups through a process of random selection.

**Website:** This Executive Summary, a full detailed report and additional related information and resources for all employees will be made available via employee forums and on-line.

**Foundations for Success:** This series of workshops designed to promote employee development and job satisfaction completed its inaugural series February 4, 2003. Thirty non-managerial/supervisory employees participated in the leadership development program. There were more than 100 applicants for the initial series. Participants obtained hands-on information from a variety of business professionals and enrichment consultants. Future series will continue to be provided.

**Cultural Competence Educational Sessions:** These educational sessions will cover basic and department-specific information and strategies and presented at multiple dates, times and sites to all levels of staff and faculty. Sessions have been presented to general staff and in department-specific venues. Future efforts will include online courses.

**Cultural Competence Retreats:** These retreats are specifically designed for educators to develop culturally specific and relevant content for syllabi; they have been presented to College of Dentistry and Allied Health and will be presented to other departments in the future.

**Cultural Competence Lectures for Students:** They have been presented to students of Pharmacy, Dentistry, Allied Health, and the College of Medicine's Professionalism Symposium. A special committee is addressing curricular changes and additions regarding cultural competence.

**Cultural Competence Mini-Workshop:** For new House Officers

**Resource Library:** UNMC's library will continue to be enriched with an extensive collection of books, periodicals and other resources on cultural competence and human diversity

**Future Assessments:** Future like surveys will be conducted to assess change over time and to learn from all persons engaged with UNMC; the current assessment would serve as baseline data and is reflective of one point in time.

Such strategies will assist UNMC leaders in promoting cultural competence as an integral component of a successful working environment—making the University of Nebraska Medical Center an organization where all persons feel respected for their cultures, contributions and points of view.