**CONCEPT PAPER FROM INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE:**

**OBJECTIVE (C): More effectively recruit and retain excellent faculty, staff, and students.**

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Objective being addressed in this concept paper is how UD, in the context of administrative and infrastructure units, can more effectively recruit and retain excellent faculty, staff, and students

In an early meeting, the Infrastructure Committee worked to define key elements of an educational institution's infrastructure that could support (or hinder) a University's mission. The committee then established a list of infrastructure units in place at the University of Delaware and implemented a plan to solicit feedback from as many of the known "infrastructure" units at UD as possible. These meetings were held during the Fall 2014 semester and collected feedback and input from more than 1500 UD staff from 33 units as well as from Assistant Professors and College Business Officers from all of the Colleges. Supervisors and director feedback was collected separately to enable a more free flow exchange of ideas at meetings. Everyone was encouraged to share anonymous input and ideas by sending campus mail to the chairs of the infrastructure committee. The meeting format engaged participants to consider four questions about what UD can do to: A) Ensure a diverse campus community and welcoming environment; B) Systematically expand innovation and capacity for research; C) Recruit and retain the best faculty, staff, and students; and D) Enrich the undergraduate experience in and out of the classroom. Summaries of each of the specific ideas and suggestions coming from each unit were then shared back with the unit. The committee reviewed all of the input collected and identified common themes around each of the four topics. In reviewing all of the materials and considering the issues that were raised, the committee felt that the feedback was best presented as six (rather than four) objectives with a series of specific, often measurable tasks, that support each objective or that support multiple objectives (newly added topics are E) Improve campus climate by (breaking down silos and) fostering a culture of collaboration and creation towards a common goal; and F) Invest in physical facilities and information technology to foster community, creativity, productivity, and to inspire and enable excellence).

LESSONS LEARNED and COMMON THEMES

As the strength of the university is largely based on its members, including faculty, staff, and students, there needs to be a more effective process in place for recruitment, retention, and promotion. The committee felt that to recruit excellent students, it is imperative to create a rich undergraduate experience for them and to ensure that they can work with excellent faculty and staff. Creating a rich undergraduate experience is covered by the infrastructure committee's concept paper: Objective D. In addition, relatively little specific feedback was given related to postdoc recruitment and it was felt that postdocs were attracted to work with the best faculty, so here we focus on recruitment and retention of excellent faculty and staff. While there are some processes in place to recruit and retain UD talent, community feedback collected by this committee identifies areas for improvement. These areas include: creation of incentives for delivering excellence in a more collaborative environment with a clear path for career advancement; updating the compensation process commensurate with performance; updating the process to improve or eliminate underperforming units, faculty, and staff; and defining a process for professional development and training. There are several subtle challenges associated with each of these Tasks (e.g. certain bargaining unit employees have limits on ways that employees can be recognized) but none of the issues identified by the committee were deemed difficult to overcome.

STRATEGIC THEMES

In the end, the committee identified the following issues that should be addressed related to the recruitment and retention of excellent faculty and staff. First, the community should establish incentives that promote and reward excellence. Such incentives will help retain the best staff at UD, and within units at UD. Second, compensation and benefits, including staff raises, should be examined relative to the local and national market and the outcomes of these evaluations should be clearly communicated to faculty and staff. Third, there was a sense that the current environment lacks the support necessary to deal with underperforming units, faculty, and staff. Specifically there is the need to create processes, supported at the highest levels, for the elimination of underperforming units and for training for supervisors to manage underperforming faculty and staff . Finally, feedback received by the committee indicates that there is a need to make professional development opportunities available to all staff to update skills and to help staff understand the university structure and their integral role in the University. Addressing these themes through the proposed tasks below will have important positive impacts on UD's ability to recruit and retain the best people, which will help UD become more diverse and welcoming, expand our research capacity, and enrich the experience offered to undergraduates.

TASKS

**C. 1) Identify at least 5 new ways to reward employee excellence and implement a system to recognize and reward the top 5% of UD staff in a unit in any given year.**

**C.2) Create and fund a ladder system to enable staff to stay in their current unit and improve their compensation and expand their responsibilities without having to create new positions or having the employee seek employment elsewhere.**

**C.3) Define and update compensation and benefit levels for UD positions in relation to the local and national market and make this information transparent to the UD community.**

**C.4) Evaluate, and communicate more effectively, the issues regarding the annual staff raise pool in the context of relevant expenses (e.g. parking rates).**

**C.5) Establish better processes and provide better training for supervisors to manage and address underperforming staff including training on management skills, interpersonal communications, and other relevant skills.** *This Task also supports Objective A: diverse community and welcoming environment.*

**C.6) Create a central process, backed by the President and Provost, to identify and support the elimination of  underperforming units in each College by 2020.**

**C.7) Require managers and supervisors to work with staff to update skills and ensure that professional development opportunities are accessible to UD staff from all units and shifts.**

**C.8) Create a professional development course (in person and/or online) that explains how Universities are organized and function and that also defines unique attributes and defining characteristics of the University of Delaware.**