**CONCEPT PAPER FROM INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE:**

**OBJECTIVE (E): To improve campus climate by (breaking down silos and) fostering a culture of collaboration and creation towards a common goal.**

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Objective being addressed in this concept paper is how UD, in the context of administrative and infrastructure units, can improve campus climate by (breaking down silos and) fostering a culture of collaboration and creation towards a common goal.

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

The issue of improving campus climate is one that impacts nearly every part of a modern university's operations because universities are arguably all about people: undergraduate and graduate students, postgraduate scholars and visitors, the academic and administrative staff, the alumni, the local community, and of course, the faculty. Based on the feedback and interactions with the infrastructure units, the campus climate appears to be quite poor. The committee attributes some of the issues raised to a lack of a clear vision and mission for UD and how any given individual, or unit, aligns with that mission as well as to administrative processes that appear to be overly complex. There was a clear sense that many individuals and units have limited or no capacity for effective communication around topics that impact the broad community. The idea that service-based units could offer a more proactive and positive experience for end-users came up in many discussions and was often referred to as the desire for a Disney-like experience. On the positive side, the committee met with staff and managers of various levels who wanted to be more proactive in their responsibilities and spend time to learn how to help the University advance and compete effectively in today's world.

STRATEGIC THEMES

In the end, the committee felt that there were a few issues that need to be addressed. First, the community needs more engaged leadership from the President's office with on campus matters. Second, administrative units could better understand how their function relates to other units and end-users around campus. Such a culture change could be implemented through a staff sabbatical / job shadowing opportunity as well as by requiring service units to rely on customer feedback before implementing changes. Third, there was a sense that there are many ineffective managers and supervisors on campus that do not engage junior staff in opportunities to improve their units or foster their professional development. Finally, there was recognition that the responsibility-centered management financial model ("RBB") changed the nature of conversations and decision-making around campus to one focused on dollars at the expense of the recognition that Universities are still about people. Addressing these themes through the proposed tasks below will begin to improve campus climate as well as have important positive impacts on UD's ability to recruit and retain the best people, become more diverse and welcoming, expand our research capacity, and enrich the experience offered to undergraduates.

TASKS

**E.1) Foster improved morale and a sense of community by having the President visit with academic and nonacademic units at least once per year to increase communication about mission, vision, and values.** *This Task also supports Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.2) Have the President's (or EVP's) office implement a "staff sabbatical" via a job-shadowing experience for all UD staff to spend several weeks working in other units around campus.***This Task also supports Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.3) Require all administrative units to actively solicit and rely on "customer" feedback to ensure that they are meeting needs and expectations of their clients and stakeholders and to clearly communicate any changes to the relevant parts of the campus community.** *This Task also supports Objective A: diverse community and welcoming environment as well as Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.4) Overhaul HR processes, timelines, and training related to classification and compensation and hiring.** *This Task also supports Objective A: diverse community and welcoming environment as well as Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.5) Establish a mechanism to remove consistently underperforming supervisors, managers, chairs, and administrators.** *This Task also supports Objective A: diverse community and welcoming environment as well as Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.6) Actively encourage staff to identify and propose innovative solutions to existing problems and reward and recognize staff for doing so.** *This Task also supports Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.7) Require administrative and academic units to engage staff of all levels within a unit to brainstorm ways to innovate business practices at least once per year.** *This Task also supports Objective B: research and innovative business practices as well as Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.8) Require managers to include staff of all levels to participate in (nonacademic) hiring in their units.** *This Task also supports Objective B: research and innovative business practices as well as Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*

**E.9) Establish a mechanism within the RBB framework to recognize the contributions of people towards the success of units.** *This Task also supports Objective A: diverse community and welcoming environment as well as Objective B: research and innovative business practices as well as Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people.*