**Delaware Will Shine – Models of a New American Research University**

**Resource Analysis sub-group – *Workplace Climate***

**Introduction & Background:**

Over the course of the fall semester 2014, we conducted sensing sessions and consultations with various constituent groups across the entire campus. Here, we presented questions to these diverse groups, usually well in advance of the actual meeting, and led these groups through focused feedback to gauge issues and concerns related to Resource Analysis. The Resource Analysis sub-group engaged the following constituent groups on campus – non-exempt staff advisory council, the exempt staff advisory group, the Office of Economic Innovation and Partnership, Arts & Sciences department chairs and program directors, Athletics & Recreation staff, Diversity-focuses activities/units, Research council, and a large cross section of academic and non-academic units (70 participants).

We broadly defined resources to include not only financial considerations but also people, community engagement, brand, space, facilities/infrastructure, alumni, and time. In several constituent sessions we posed questions to the groups, had small groups discuss questions, and report out to the larger group with the results. Copious notes were taken on responses and we began to hear certain themes and issues repeated regardless of the composition of the constituent groups. Some examples of the questions posed to facilitate the overall discussion include:

* What do we “under” resource at the University?
* What do we “over” resource at the University?
* How do we align existing resources to improve the unit and institutional efficiency>?
* How can we partner with others (alumni, industry, government, and non-profits) to (1) promote and provide opportunities for our graduates, (2) leverage and better utilize our existing resources, (3) identify markets for new programs and opportunities, and (4) realign our resources to enhance diversity?
* How can we change the curriculum or how we deliver the curriculum to provide a better value to students?

This concept paper will focus just on the responses we received from these various constituent groups as related to the perception of the *workplace climate* at the University of Delaware.

**Strategic Themes – as related to Workplace Climate:**

While many of these themes around workplace climate will be perceived as negative, there were many comments about how proud employees are of this great University and despite its issues, as related to workplace climate, that they felt a connection to the institution and its mission. Almost to a person, these constituents talked about the beauty of this campus and its infrastructure as a source of great pride.

Overall, a consistent theme heard throughout the sessions was that the staff and faculty employees feel that the University has too many administrators and that there is a gap, or disconnect, between the administration and the faculty. Many felt that over the past 5 years the University has added numerous non-academic, senior administrative positions, while staff and administrative support at the unit and department level has not increased, despite perceived increases in workload. Many staff reported a low morale as a result of this perception.

Adding to the morale issue with staff is the fact that there is no mechanism to monetarily reward and recognize the great efforts of our staff. Over and again we heard from staff that faculty receive additional increases (outside of merit increases), including structural adjustments per CBA, and negotiated salaries when assuming academic administrative positions, while the staff are not adequately compensated.

A lack of staff promotion/advancement opportunities was another theme we heard consistently, which leads to a perception that senior administration, both non-academic and academic, undervalue the efforts of the rank and file staff. Employees also felt that resources have been misappropriated away from unit and departmental level and directed to senior hires, the immense expansion of non-academic support units (eg., legal, athletics, public safety, development, OEIP), and the construction of many, many new buildings on campus.

Also, many constituents indicated that the University becomes mired in attempting to accomplish too many initiatives, many of which are not sustainable without significant influx of financial resources.

Another common workplace climate theme dealt with Human Resources. Specifically, many felt that employee development, training, mentoring, and clear career paths were under resourced at the University.

**Lessons Learned:**

Generally, employees are proud of the institution and are happy to be engaged members of this community. Much of the perception of over resourcing central activities, overbuilding brick and mortar, and competing initiatives could be mitigated by effective communications and additional transparency. For example, once explained that much of the construction on campus (residence halls, dining facilities, sports building expansion, etc.) is funded via bonds (loans) and not from annual capital funds, many constituents’ concerns were lessened. Improved clarification/communication of practices, policies, and resource utilization could improve morale at the University.

**Short-Term Tasks:**

Improve communication and transparency; provide explanation to the University community why it is critical to commit resources for new high level positions and support staff for the positions, instead of committing those resources to any number of other possibilities (faculty lines, staff to support new and existing initiatives, software, improved facilities).

**Long-term Tasks:**

Consider implementation reward system for non-faculty positions for assuming additional temporary or permanent responsibilities/projects or for particularly meritorious performance.

Consider implementation of a public budget model of 3-5 years, rather than yearly, so that units can better plan for the long-term, instead of reacting on an annual basis.

Create an environment where all faculty and staff feel as if they are working for a common purpose in addition to each individual’s own responsibilities.