

## College of Natural Sciences Staff Committee 2014-2015 Report

The following is a year-end report from the College of Natural Sciences Staff Committee (CNSSC) for the 2014-2015 academic year.

This was the first year of existence for the CNSSC and as such, much of the focus was on creating bylaws and forming processes. Some of our ideas worked, others did not. In this report we will cover our activities, what we have accomplished, what we have learned and where we will go from here.

### **Summary of committee activity**

The CNSSC met once per month, on the third Wednesday of the month for a general meeting. The sub-committees met once per month at first but less as time went on. After about six months, the general meeting was extended from one hour to an hour and a half and converted to more of a working meeting rather than primarily consisting of sub-committee reports. Extra meetings were called as needed.

In June and July of 2014, the committee participated in a two-day seminar entitled "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team." The seminar focused on personality types and how best to work with one another.

Several committee members assisted during the Spring town hall meeting and awards ceremony.

The CNSSC is officially registered with UT.

### **Bylaws**

The bylaws subcommittee met and prepared bylaws for the CNSSC. A draft of the bylaws was sent to all committee members, and they were formally adopted by the committee at the regular meeting on September 17, 2014.

On May 14, 2015 CNSSC chair Dan Machold sent an email to all committee members with proposed amendments to the bylaws to increase the size of the committee and clarify the end of the term of office of retiring members. The amendments were discussed at the May 20, 2015 regular meeting and formally adopted at the special meeting on May 28, 2015.

The bylaws have been posted on the CNSSC website and a copy is attached at the end of this document.

### **Communication**

During the past year, the communications group concentrated on establishing a Website to provide useful resources for all members of the CNS staff community. The basic structure includes a main index page, which leads to sections providing relevant information and links to training and career advancement opportunities, facilities services, lab safety, events and things to do, awards, administrative forms, documents, and checklists. Development of this website will continue, and additional features will include a central calendar and an interactive

forum, to allow more direct, real-time exchanges of ideas and news among staff members throughout the College.

### **Education and training**

The Education and Training subcommittee was established to address staff concerns about the limitations of job specific training, undocumented institutional knowledge, limited professional development, and lack of supervisor involvement in training.

#### **Action items:**

After consulting with an HR representative, the committee decided that one of the primary issues on which to focus is leadership training for everyone, especially faculty, with direct reports who are staff members. We have observed that poor management leads to numerous problems, including salary inequity, jobs that don't match job descriptions, lack of employee accountability resulting in a few employees doing a most of the work. We researched other colleges and universities to find that most require or strongly suggest, in writing, that all managers/supervisors receive management training.

Other priorities include finding ways to match new staff with others with similar job duties so they will have access to institutional knowledge, and finding ways to get staff to document institutional knowledge.

#### **Recommendations going forward:**

- We recommend that any person, including faculty, with staff direct reports be required to earn the Management Essentials Certificate, which is provided at no monetary cost. If it is impossible for anyone to take all nine classes required for the certificate, they must complete at least two classes: Managing People and Performance and Managing Compensation and Classification. Our hope is that leaders will begin to use best practices in leading their staff, such as setting expectations and goals, rewarding and recognizing good performance and creating development opportunities to name a few. Faculty who manage often times have no idea of what their staff does; this makes it impossible for them to award raises based truly on merit.
- We recommend that each department be required to identify person(s) in charge of training incoming employees, including employees moved into a position due to restructuring. 10% percentage of the trainers' job could be to assign or recommend Lynda.com modules for performance improvement. Also, the budget for conference attendance for advisors needs to be restored; advisors work really hard and should be given a chance to refresh skills by attending advising conferences.
- We recommend that staff be given supervisor approval to start and/or attend weekly or monthly "Peer Learning Meet Ups." Peer Learning Meet Ups are job support groups designed to get staff with similar job duties and titles together for peer job training and support. These Meet Ups will supplement job training provided through TX Class, and staff will be able to consult with each other on the best ways to perform certain tasks. We recommend refreshments, such as coffee and cookies, be provided at meetings for each established Meet Up.
- We recommend that template log sheets be designed and implemented for documenting tasks or institutional knowledge so that it isn't all lost when a staff member leaves a position.

## Survey results

In February, we polled the CNS staff and asked them to indicate how important certain topics are to them. We also added a comment field so that people could make suggestions. We will attach those comments to the end of the report.

The results are as follows:

Topic	Low Priority (1)	Medium Priority (2)	High Priority (3)	Number of Responses	Mean
Position-Specific Training	19	82	121	222	2.46
Management/Supervisor Training	21	85	119	225	2.44
Documentation or Resources and Services	20	96	110	226	2.40
Workspace/Lab Safety	47	84	92	223	2.20
Documentation of Admin Procedures	38	106	80	224	2.19
Awards/Staff Recognition	56	113	55	224	2.00
Website Forum for Open Discussion	86	102	34	222	1.77
College-Wide Social Events	138	80	5	223	1.40

We addressed Management/Supervisor Training in the Education and Training section above. The website we have developed and will continue to work on will address Documentation of Resources and Services, Workplace/Lab Safety, Awards/Staff Recognition and hopefully will cover more about Documentation of Admin Procedures in the future. Position-Specific Training is an area the committee plans to tackle in the coming year.

## Lessons learned

Our two main failures were forming a committee that was too small and attempting to organize our activities around sub-committees. There was high turnover of CNSSC members, a problem we believe the College as a whole shares. Of the fourteen original committee members, we had six who left the college to seek employment elsewhere, plus one who felt he could no longer meet the requirements of both his job and the committee. Unfortunately, the main way to move up in title or to get a good pay raise is to move to another department and in many cases, that means leaving CNS. We are handling the turnover problem by increasing the number of committee members to twenty.

A low number of committee members led to low numbers on our subcommittees, which was one reason we feel they did not work well. Another is that it was increasingly difficult as time

went on for people to meet once a month in a general meeting, plus once a month in subcommittees. Halfway through the year, we reorganized around projects instead of subcommittees and turned the general meeting into a working meeting, extending the length by half an hour.

### **Future plans**

In the coming year we will:

- Re-evaluate the current organizational structure (subcommittee, etc.) with input from new members. A change to project/task oriented ad-hoc committees is likely.
- Continue developing the staff committee website. Upon formal launch, we will evaluate staff feedback and make the necessary changes

Possible project ideas for next year:

- Develop recommendations for 360/180 evaluations: what we would like to see included, how could this be implemented, pilot programs, what will be done with the data.
- Improving communication within the college: identify problem areas, propose solutions/ideas.
- Increase visibility of staff committee: solicit more ideas/input from staff, communicate more frequently with staff, and engage in social media.
- Career advancement: generate ideas to improve in this area.
- Job-specific training: organize specialized meet-ups, mentorship programs.

### **The 2014-2015 CNSSC members**

Dan Machold - Senior Software Engineer - Computer Science (Chair)

Liz Wyckoff - Research Scientist - Molecular Biosciences (Co-Chair)

Norma Hernandez - Senior Academic Advisor - Biology (Secretary/Treasurer)

Ana Aguilar - Facility Manager - Culture Collection of Algae

Gary Thomas - Technical Staff Supervisor - Physics

Liz Flynn-Whittenton - Administrative Associate - Computer Science

Annette Hairston - Academic Advising Coordinator - UTeach Science Program

Katherine Reynolds - Project Manager - CNS Research & Facilities

Bill Wren - Public Affairs Specialist II - Astronomy

Raluca Gearba - Research Scientist Associate - Center for Nano Molecular Science

Mike McIntosh - Systems Administrator I - CNS Information Technology Services

### **The 2015-2016 CNSSC members**

Ana Aguilar - Facility Manager - Culture Collection of Algae (Chair)

Annette Hairston - Academic Advising Coordinator - UTeach Science Program (Co-Chair)

Raluca Gearba - Research Scientist Associate - Center for Nano Molecular Science  
(Sec./Treasurer)

Gary Thomas - Technical Staff Supervisor - Physics

Liz Flynn-Whittenton - Administrative Associate - Computer Science

Bill Wren - Public Affairs Specialist II - Astronomy

Mike McIntosh - Systems Administrator I - CNS Information Technology Services

Donna Benson - Development Associate - College of Natural Sciences

Darrin Brager - Research Scientist - Department of Neuroscience

Henry Cantu - Senior Financial Analyst - McDonald Observatory

Carrie Culpepper - Project Manager - UTeach Science Program

Shannon Gutheil - Pre-Health Professions Coach - DNS Health Professions Office

Patricia Gutierrez - Senior Academic Advisor - Curriculum & Academics Programs Admin

Brent Halling - Research Associate - Department of Neuroscience

Heather Herrick - Coordinator - Marine Science Institute

Scott Rynbrandt - Research Engr/Sci Associate I - Biology Instructional Office

Sasha Schellenberg - Administrative Manager - Department of Statistics & Data Science

Angie Steelman - Laboratory/Technical Services Supervisor II - Department of Chemistry

Avani Trivedi - Senior Placement Representative - Curriculum & Academics Programs Admin

Sharon Williams - Administrative Associate - College of Natural Science

# CNS Staff Committee Survey

Last Modified: 05/28/2015

## 1. Please indicate how much priority you think the CNS Staff Committee should place on the following topics

#	Question	Low Priority	Medium Priority	High Priority	Total Responses	Mean
2	Position-Specific Training	19	82	121	222	2.46
1	Management/Supervisor Training	21	85	119	225	2.44
8	Documentation of Available Resources and Services	20	96	110	226	2.40
5	Workplace/Lab Safety	47	84	92	223	2.20
3	Documentation of Administrative Procedures	38	106	80	224	2.19
6	Awards/Staff Recognition	56	113	55	224	2.00
7	Website Forum for Open Discussion	86	102	34	222	1.77
4	College-Wide Social Events	138	80	5	223	1.40

Statistic	Management/Supervisor Training	Position-Specific Training	Documentation of Administrative Procedures	College-Wide Social Events	Workplace/Lab Safety	Awards/Staff Recognition	Website Forum for Open Discussion	Documentation of Available Resources and Services
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mean	2.44	2.46	2.19	1.40	2.20	2.00	1.77	2.40
Variance	0.43	0.42	0.49	0.29	0.59	0.50	0.49	0.42
Standard Deviation	0.66	0.65	0.70	0.54	0.76	0.71	0.70	0.65
Total Responses	225	222	224	223	223	224	222	226

# **Bylaws of the College of Natural Sciences Staff Committee**

September 17, 2014

Modified May 28, 2015

## **I Name, Acronym and Abbreviations**

The organization shall be named the College of Natural Sciences Staff Committee and the acronym shall be CNSSC. The College of Natural Sciences may be referred to as the CNS.

## **II Mission Statement**

To promote the efficiency, retention and morale of the CNS staff.

## **III Purpose**

The purpose of the CNSSC is to facilitate enhanced communication and collaboration between CNS departments, to improve the training and educational opportunities provided to CNS staff, and to bolster the morale and culture of CNS staff members.

## **IV Membership**

There shall be no discrimination for reasons of religion, age, race or ethnicity, color, sex, marital status, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

### **Section 1. Eligibility**

Membership shall be open to all full-time staff members of the CNS with a minimum of two years experience working in the CNS. There will be 15-20 members that represent diverse CNS departments, organized research units (ORUs) and the Dean's office. Additionally, the committee membership will seek to adequately represent the diversity of job functions found amongst CNS staff.

### **Section 2. Election of the CNSSC members and Term of Membership**

New CNSSC members and at least three alternate members shall be elected by a simple majority of retiring and continuing members of the CNSSC at the regularly scheduled May meeting. The Bylaws/Nominations & Elections Subcommittee shall conduct the nomination and election of new committee members. Additional new members may be appointed from the alternates list or by special election at the discretion of the CNSSC membership. The term of office shall be two years, and the normal year shall be from June 1 through May 31. All retiring members should attend the June meeting following their retirement from the committee. Members selected mid-year from the alternates list or in special elections will complete the time remaining in the first year of their term and then serve one additional year. Replacement members may serve two additional years at the discretion of the committee. Members of the CNS Dean's Staff Task Force who continued to the CNSSC during the first year of its existence shall serve a one-year term.

### **Section 3. Timeline**

An email invitation shall be sent to all eligible staff members in the CNS during the second week of April with information on the upcoming selection of new CNSSC members, eligibility for membership and the procedure for applying for membership. A reminder notice will be sent during the fourth week of April, and application for CNSSC membership will close on April 30<sup>th</sup>. New members and alternates will be elected at the May general meeting, and applicants will be notified of the status of their application no later than May 31<sup>st</sup>. New members will officially join the committee at the June meeting, and the newly elected officers shall preside. Retiring members will be encouraged to attend the June meeting, but they will not be eligible to vote.

### **Section 4. Rights of Membership**

Members in good standing are eligible to attend the general committee meetings, vote, serve on standing and ad-hoc subcommittees, and hold office.

## **V Organizational structure (Officers)**

### **Section 1. Elections, Terms of Service and Qualifications for Office**

Officers shall be elected at the May meeting each year, and their term of service shall be through May of the following year. All retiring officers should attend the June meeting following their retirement from the committee. Both continuing and retiring members may vote for new officers. Members completing their first year of service shall be eligible for all officer positions. If an officer is unable to complete their term of service, a special election will be held at the discretion of the committee. All members of the CNSSC will qualify to serve if chosen in a special election.

### **Section 2. Offices**

#### **Chair**

The Chair presides at general CNSSC meetings and at meetings of the executive subcommittee. The Chair will coordinate the work of the standing subcommittees and represent the CNSSC at the CNS Business Officers meetings. The Chair ensures that accounts are cleared at the year-end and that reports have been filed. The Chair provides orientation to the incoming and turns over all materials to his or her successor.

#### **Vice-Chair**

The Vice-chair shall assist the Chair in the performance of his or her duties and shall perform the duties of the Chair in his or her absence. The Vice-Chair shall serve as a regular member of the executive subcommittee.

#### **Secretary/Treasurer**

The Secretary/Treasurer shall take minutes at the general meetings and post the minutes on the CNSSC website. The Secretary/Treasurer shall coordinate the budget process and keep records of all financial transactions. Budget records shall be available to all members on request and formally presented to the Chair at the general meeting at the end of each budget year. The Secretary/Treasurer shall serve as a regular member of the executive subcommittee.

## **VI Meetings of the CNSSC**

### **Section 1. General Meetings**

The CNSSC meets once per month at times and locations designated by the committee Chair or general consensus. Members will be notified of changes in the monthly meeting time or date no less than 7 days prior to the meeting.

### **Section 2. Special Meetings**

Special meetings may be called by the Chair or Vice-chair as necessary to fulfill the mission of the organization. Members shall be notified no less than 7 days prior to the special meeting.

### **Section 3. Meeting Agendas**

The chair determines the meeting agenda with advice from the CNSSC. Individual members may submit agenda items to the Chair in advance of the scheduled meeting.

### **Section 4. Meeting Quorum**

Two-thirds of the CNSSC membership in attendance shall constitute a quorum for all actions that require a vote of the membership. Members unable to attend a meeting may designate a proxy through an email to the committee list serve.

## **VII Subcommittees**

### **Section 1. Standing Subcommittees**

Membership in standing subcommittees shall be limited to members of the CNSSC. Each subcommittee shall choose a chair that will report on the subcommittee's activities at CNSSC general meetings. Additional standing subcommittees may be established at the discretion of the general membership. Standing subcommittees shall meet at least one time between each of the general CNSSC meetings.

**Executive Subcommittee:** The executive subcommittee shall consist of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. The executive subcommittee may invite other CNSSC members on an ad-hoc basis when input is needed. The executive subcommittee shall meet monthly at least one week prior to the general meeting. The executive subcommittee shall consider and make recommendations on matters presented to it by the chair or other CNSSC members, assist the chair in preparation of the agenda for the general meeting, and advise the CNSSC of the need for a special meeting.

**Bylaws/Nominations & Elections Subcommittee:** The Bylaws subcommittee shall prepare the CNSSC bylaws and bring them to the general committee for adoption. They will assist the Executive committee in the implementation of the bylaws as needed. Should need arise, they shall be responsible for preparing any amendments to the bylaws and bringing them to the general CNSSC for adoption. They shall oversee the election of new members each spring.

**Communication Subcommittee:** The Communication subcommittee fosters two-way communication throughout the college. This process shall include, but not be limited to establishing and maintaining a website designed to meet the needs of CNS staff members. The content will include, but not be limited to, information, procedures and forms to aid in carrying out staff-specific functions, communication of statements from the CNS Dean's

office relevant to staff, training opportunities, contact information, links to calendars of upcoming events, and an interactive forum for exchange of ideas and concerns among members of the staff. The communications subcommittee will be responsible for coordinating with the Dean's office to maintain a current email list of all members of the CNS staff.

**Culture and Morale Subcommittee:** The Culture and Morale subcommittee shall work to create the environment necessary for the success and retention of staff members throughout the college. They shall develop recommendations for the Dean's office to improve morale and promote collegiality among staff members of the college, including, but not limited to improving supervision to create a professional environment, organizing social activities and celebrating departmental and individual milestones.

**Training Subcommittee:** The Training subcommittee shall identify areas where needed training is not currently readily available and explore resources to provide that training. Subcommittee members will oversee development of mentorship programs where experienced staff members can assist staff members learning a new task. A method to recognize experienced members shall be developed. The training committee will partner with the communication committee to provide links to online training and to publicize upcoming training opportunities.

## **Section 2. Ad-hoc Subcommittees**

The Executive committee or the general CNSSC membership shall establish ad-hoc committees as needed. Each ad-hoc committee will choose a member of the CNSSC to act as chair, who will report to the CNSSC membership at the general meeting. Individuals who are not members of the CNSSC may serve on ad-hoc committees. The matter under consideration will determine the time span of the ad-hoc committee, and it will be disbanded when that purpose is served.

## **VIII Amendments**

Any proposed amendment to these bylaws must be distributed to the membership at least two weeks prior to the vote. Ratification of the amendment will require an affirmative vote by a two-thirds (2/3) of the CNSSC membership. Proxy voting will be allowed, as described in bylaw IV, section 4 above. Adoption of an amendment becomes effective immediately after the vote.

## **XI Adoption of the Bylaws**

The CNSSC bylaws were adopted based on an affirmative vote by a majority of the committee at a general meeting held on September 17, 2014 and became effective at the close of that meeting. The date of any future revisions to the bylaws will be noted in this section.