

Update to 2014 Action Items
Building a Culture of Partnership: Staff and Operations of the College of Arts & Sciences

December 2017

Prepared by the 17-18 College of Arts & Sciences Staff Advisory Committee

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Action Items

Promote collaboration to solve common problems

Share A&S goals that include contributions at all levels, communicated from the Deans to the faculty and staff managers. **UPDATE: The student/staff/faculty Strategic Planning Committee convened in January 2017 to identify strategic goals for The CAS. Work continues to progress.**

Create regular communication pathways from the College to its staff. This could include a College email list where all staff members can contribute or staff meetings that address issues raised with the Chairs and Directors. **UPDATE: The Dean's Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) has created a CU provided Sympa Listserve email list to facilitate communication among the A&S staff. In addition, the CAS has implemented monthly community meetings to share updates and build community among CAS staff.**

Convene staff and faculty members in smaller groups to determine the implications of new policies for operations, offer data on the impact of existing policies, and establish best practices for implementation. **UPDATE: Small working groups have been formed within the CAS such as a research administration working group, scholarship, HR, and Program Fee.**

Streamline and clarify processes

Offer or recommend existing trainings from CU offices to ensure staff are prepared and accountable for financial management tasks. Financial management is an essential component of the College's long-term health, and reading unit budget reports, identifying and troubleshooting deficits, and administering grant funds must be done accurately and with an eye towards the best use of resources. In particular, the College would be well-served by establishing new employee materials for financial management and supporting new staff in obtaining the necessary skills. **UPDATE: The CAS has increased trainings with a commitment to establish a training schedule for 2018.**

Centralize HR functions and align personnel processes for A&S faculty and classified and university staff. Establish an HR matrix for routing within the College, including the different HR procedures for various job classes. As a result, units will not have to spend as much time learning and relearning the various HR tasks related to appointments. **UPDATE: The CAS has updated and streamlined policies and procedures related to personnel and hiring. The CAS**

website has become a “go to” source of up-to-date information.

Create online documentation for A&S curriculum office matters. With so many staff members working on various aspects of curriculum coordination, learning best practices and training new staff can be a challenge. Centralized online resources that document A&S procedures for course proposals, certificates, and other curriculum-related submissions would help staff better support the academic mission and help the curriculum office with repeated queries. **UPDATE: CU Boulder has implemented an online catalog and revision process (CourseLeaf) and is currently in the process of rolling out phase two, CourseLeaf Curriculum (CIM). Trainings will be available January 2018.**

Make best use of space. This may include encouraging broader academic scheduling options for A&S courses, especially as students increasingly need more options, such as evening blocks, to allow for jobs or internships that support their education and future career plans. Beyond classroom space, staff members need adequate, functional office spaces to facilitate their work. **UPDATE: This committee strongly encourages the CAS to explore alternative schedules and greater flexibility in work from home guidelines (see campus guidelines below). In addition to providing options for uses of space, alternate schedules and work from home arrangements can be a cost effective way to enhance existing salary and benefit packages, fulfill business needs, assist with recruitment and retention, improve productivity and creativity and accommodate a changing workforce.**

<https://www.colorado.edu/hr/policies-guidance/alternate-schedules-and-work-home-guidance>

Utilize technology more effectively

Convert common paper processes to electronic methods in order to simplify and provide transparency, an initiative supported by CU-Boulder Chief Financial Officer Kelly Fox. Electronic signatures and electronic routing are two key examples. A system for electronic routing would be faster and more transparent, making it easier to identify bottlenecks and track lost documents. **UPDATE: Many CAS HR, curriculum and other processes have gone paperless and are supported by electronic signatures. Performance Management Plans for classified and University Staff will collect electronic signatures in AY 17-18 are in the process of updating to online forms for AY 18-19. This committee strongly encourages the campus to support the use of DocuSign to obtain signatures and complete workflow.**

Provide or identify existing hands-on and remote training to maximize staff proficiency with IT tools, from the A&S portal to Cognos reports. Encourage a culture of re-training and refreshing to update skills. Online and video training are helpful for staff members who have difficulty leaving their desks or rearranging their schedules. Build online resources in specific areas where the College has standards for staff performance: finance and budget, human resources, and new hire training. **UPDATE: OIT has shifted some trainings to online platforms such as webinars. The CAS should continue to encourage staff to update their skills by utilizing these new platforms.**

Align processes for using data, so staff members can better plan for future needs and anticipate

bottlenecks. The goal is to strengthen data analysis and reporting in service of A&S units. Data management would include analysis of enrollments, number of majors, incoming RAP students, student credit hours, Leaves and Replacement requests, etc. **UPDATE: This is an outstanding issue that this committee recommends the CAS identifies as a priority.**

Improve student experiences and retention

Important first step in overall retention efforts. The working group's tasks may include examining orientation practices on other CU campuses. Increase partnerships across departments to create clearer orientation procedures for students and staff: a key example is the partnership among RAP Program Coordinators, Academic Advisors, and the Office of Orientation.

UPDATE: Concerns remain due to the changing orientation processes the past few years but there are bright spots, most notably for departments developing undergraduate programs working with Advising, such as ATOC. Losing institutional knowledge due to employee turnover remains a concern as it affects student retention.

Develop more integrated information for students and examine the feasibility of a central resource hub for students that could direct inquiries across the College. The goal would be to assist students with information about College-wide academic opportunities like internships, undergraduate research, and certificates. Additionally, front line staff in academic units could cross-train to provide more consistent information to students across the College.

Share best practices for student outreach strategies currently being used or developed by A&S units. Connection to a community can help students thrive on a large campus, and some staff members have already established ways to make students feel connected to their programs, departments, and College. Examples include communication with students in certain GPA ranges about academic opportunities and individualized support, and coordination of student advisory groups that allow students to make suggestions and become involved in the life of the department or program.

Redefine Roles

Recognize staff expertise and contributions to the work of the College. Examples include encouraging the inclusion of service and leadership activities in annual performance evaluations, establishing College-wide staff recognition programs, and highlighting individual staff members in publications or other forums. **UPDATE: The CAS is in the process of implementing a staff-wide recognition program spring 2018.**

Create a database similar to VIVO for faculty, documenting the skills and expertise of A&S staff. Such a database would allow the College and campus to deploy the skillsets of A&S staff, as well as increase staff members' sense of connection to the CU-Boulder community and academic mission. A database would also support future mentorship programs and learning communities, outlined below.

Include staff and faculty together on A&S committees in appropriate issue areas to foster a sense of partnership and to draw upon a broader range of expertise. **UPDATE: In addition to the CAS Strategic Planning Committee convening in January 2017, the campus has also**

assembled the Academic Futures committees which is made up of staff, faculty, and students.

Promote improvements in career advancement and compensation structure. We recommend efforts to establish professional career ladders as a means to retain staff with significant expertise and recruit talented new employees. This process should be informed by data on staff turnover. For example, the reallocation of surplus budget due to staff retirements toward promotions can be investigated. **UPDATE: The CAS continues to migrate Classified Staff to University Staff when appropriate and is in the process of standardizing job descriptions so they are recognized as more complex. In 2017, the CAS HR completed a comprehensive review of salaries within the CAS and recommended compression for over 100 staff positions. The next step will be to compare CAS staff salaries to campus peers such as Engineering and Leeds.**

Include staff in strategic plans for the future. Given the budgetary constraints facing the College and campus, we recommend examining additional ways to recognize and develop staff beyond salary increases, such as leadership opportunities. Inclusion of staff in the stated goals and strategy of a unit is another means to recognize staff as part of the College's future.

Train and Professionalize

Provide comprehensive onboarding materials for new employees. For staff members new to CU, the number of IT systems, policies, and procedures can be overwhelming, and staff in various academic units with the same duties rarely have formal opportunities to interact. College and unit training plans ensure that staff members are brought up to speed faster, from managing operations to working with students. **UPDATE: The CAS Dean's office is reorganizing duties to make onboarding a priority.**

Create a professional development pool that staff members could apply to for workshops, conferences, and other professional development opportunities. Encourage forums for trainees to share with staff and faculty what was learned. The College of Engineering has an extensive Staff Excellence Program that could be used as a model for a new A&S program, as do peer institutions, such as the University of Washington. **UPDATE: This initiative is on the list to accomplish in the coming year.**

Establish incentives for academic units that encourage staff development. Staff members are already motivated to pursue professional development, but their units may not connect staff professional development opportunities to increased skills and job knowledge, or may not see the long-term benefits of short-term impact to staff workloads or schedules. Incentives for units, such as limited financial awards, would help encourage a culture of professional development across the College. **UPDATE: The CAS has provided funding for CAS staff on a first come first serve basis to participate in year-long Franklin Covey training. Campus offers a tuition benefit program and HR developed a Leadership Certificate in conjunction with the College of Engineering, free of charge. However, there are concerns that these**

opportunities cannot be taken full advantage of because of workload demands.

Develop A&S certifications in areas where staff expertise will benefit units and the College as a whole (e.g., financial management, alumni outreach, or project planning). Identify existing training sessions provided by Human Resources and other campus offices that meet College priorities, and as necessary, modify for content and form. Such training could be provided in modular units during summer and other breaks, taking advantage of staff 12-month work schedules. **UPDATE: With the Academic Futures and CAS Strategic Planning underway there is no plan to take on this recommendation at this time.**

Network and Communicate

Enhance networking and mentoring among staff members through learning communities in particular issue areas. These peer-to-peer learning communities, operating online or in person, would contribute to better operation of units. Additionally, learning communities provide new leadership opportunities for staff. Specific steps may include Learning communities would create email group forums based on job code and/or subscription, with a searchable record for new staff, similar to the existing Research Administrators group. Such groups could elect officers to coordinate events and monitor emails. **UPDATE: The CAS has explored ideas to provide greater mentoring opportunities. For example, the CAS is working on identifying senior/expert staff members to work on project teams, offer critical feedback, and identify department pain points. The CAS is also exploring the development of a lead/staff trainer position, which will assist departments in creating consistent practices, maintaining continuity, and addressing issues.**

In-person meetings could provide opportunities for informal Q&A and shared best practices. Volunteers from the learning communities can organize meetings, and gathering in different spaces on campus offers a new appreciation for other departments and programs. The initial connection to a learning community could be part of new employee training. **UPDATE: In addition to A&S Community meetings, specific forums have been actualized (performance management, A&S budget forums) with an eye to holding more in the future.**

Learning communities could leverage their numbers to obtain group rates for certifications, enhancing job performance and knowledge in their fields. Such certifications include the CPA for accountants, SSCP for IT professionals, and PMP for project managers. See above.

Create a voluntary staff mentorship program modeled after existing A&S resources, such as the Early Career Faculty Program run by the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program. It can be difficult for staff members to know where to turn for guidance, especially for sensitive matters concerning human resources or conflict resolution. Staff willing to serve as mentors could provide a brief bio with areas of expertise and contact information for a section of the A&S website. This could also be accomplished through a staff database similar to VIVO, mentioned above. **See above.**

Develop an annual A&S staff conference along the lines of the University of Michigan StaffWorks. Such a conference would bring together a series of speakers and panels by and for

A&S staff. This would support a culture of affiliation and recognition for staff, as well as provide opportunities to share information about new technologies and business practices. **UPDATE:** **With the Academic Futures and CAS strategic planning underway there is no plan to take on this recommendation at this time.**