Performance Management in an Academic Environment

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Agenda

• General overview
  – Performance Management
  – Policies behind performance
  – Attract, Onboard & Retain
  – Common Misconceptions
  – Getting Help
Performance Management Overview

• What is performance management?
  – Current state
  – Performance Management Literature
  – Process
Performance Management Overview

• HR Literature
  – Mission
  – Transparency
  – Open communication
  – Training
  – Career development
Department Chair Role

The Academic Year and performance discussions

– Performance & contract reviews for tenure track faculty
– Evaluation of instructional staff
– Evaluation of university staff permanent or project
– Graduate Assistant (Research and Teaching)
– Undergraduate student help (research or administrative)
Performance & Policy

- Academic Year & Performance
  - Tenure & Promotion (August – December)
  - Faculty Reviews (January – March)
  - Pay Plan driven merit process (January – March, if such things existed)
  - Post tenure reviews
  - Academic Staff reviews (December – February)
  - University Staff reviews (dependent on appt)
Performance and Policy

• By Contract Type
  – Faculty
  – Academic Staff Probationary
  – Academic Staff Contractual (greater than 50%)
  – University staff permanent and project
  – Graduate Assistants

• Code of Conduct
Performance and Policies

• Academic staff
  – Requirements under the policy
  – Self evaluations
  – Official file
  – Formal & Informal reviews
Performance & Policy

• University Staff
  – Requirements under the Policy
  – Self evaluations
  – Probationary review(s)
  – Expectations
Performance Management

• “Inherited” employees

• Recruitment
  – Setting standards
    • Evaluate the needs of the department
    • Redesign the position
    • Honest about the position and the job duties
  – Who should be involved in the recruitment
    • Colleagues, customers, supervisor?
  – Who can help onboard the new employee?
Recruitment and Performance Management

• Recruitment
  – Evaluating Candidates
    • Honest
    • Interviews go both ways
  – Hiring
    • If you don’t think someone can do the job don’t make the hire!
Onboarding

• Preparing for the new employee
• Setting the stage with the hire
• Employee Engagement
  – Mentoring
  – **Wellness Programs** (Work life balance)
  – Employee Resource Groups
  – Career well being
Onboarding

• Building trust
  – Position requirements/department expectations
  – Authority within the position
  – Confidentiality
  – Training

• Frequency of conversations
  – In person, electronic, informal or formal
Performance Discussions in the EC Setting

• Patagonia clothing company
  – Utilization of a “calibration session”
  – This model is a team approach to discussing performance
  – Fairness
  – Bias
  – Consistency
Employee Recognition

• Recognition
  – Educational Advisory Board Research
  – Key components
    • Specific accomplishment
    • Individual or team recognition
    • Clear communication
  – Success factors
    • Higher employee retention
    • Positive working environment
    • Improved performance
Career Development

• Balance of what employee wants vs what do Dept. needs
• Evaluation of strengths
• As employees develop
  – Promotion
  – Additional duties
  – Other external positions
  – Expanded roles
Common Misconceptions

• You can only evaluate performance on the University’s required schedule and using the University’s forms
• You can’t have different performance expectations for different employees
• Employees only perform badly because they’re lazy or incompetent
• It’s impossible to discipline state employees
Common Misconceptions

• You can only evaluate performance on the University’s required schedule and using the University’s forms
  – Performance can be evaluated at any time formally or informally
  – It’s best to keep a written record of any coaching or notice of performance deficiencies
  – But, you should also keep a written record of praise and positive achievements
Common Misconceptions, cont.

• Why do you need a written record? Three reasons:
  – Accomplishments and issues may be far removed in time from the annual evaluation process, and you want to be sure to remember them
  – Such a record may be important either for recognition, such as service awards, merit increases, etc., or for discipline
  – Puts the employee on clear notice of your expectations and assessment of their performance
Common Misconceptions, cont.

• What should a written record look like?
  – Make sure you are clear about the issues and expectations.
  – Example: you have received several complaints about a front-line employee being dismissive, rude, and hanging up on people
    • “We discussed that you should make sure to maintain positive relationships with callers and visitors”
    • Versus ...
Common Misconceptions, cont.

• “We discussed 5 complaints the department received in the last four weeks about your rudeness, dismissiveness, and having hung up on people. It is the department’s expectation that you will be pleasant and courteous with all callers and visitors. If you cannot help them immediately, you should either place them on hold until you can find an answer, direct/transfer them to the appropriate office, or get their contact information and reach out when you have an answer to their question or resolution for their issue. As the first contact many people have with our department, it is critical to our department’s reputation that you conduct yourself with professionalism at all times. As we also discussed, further instances of such conduct could lead to discipline, up to and including dismissal.”
Common Misconceptions, cont.

• You can’t have different performance expectations for different employees
  – You can, as long as the different expectations are based on legitimate, job-based reasons, such as different duties/focus, experience level
  – You can hold the same employee accountable to different expectations over time. Make sure they understand those changing expectations; set new goals in performance reviews
Common Misconceptions

• Employees only perform badly because they’re lazy or incompetent
  – Employees’ performance may suffer for a wide variety of reasons, including, but not limited to:
    • Lack of training or mentoring
    • Misunderstanding expectations or role
    • Lacking tools to do their job (equipment, software, etc.)
    • Workplace issues (climate, budget, etc.)
    • Conflicts with coworkers
    • Personal issues, such as relationship issues, sick family members, or their own medical issues
Common Misconceptions, cont.

• It’s impossible to discipline state employees
  – It does take work to build a case that discipline is necessary, but it is worth it if the issue is resolved
    • The first goal should be to improve performance
    • It may spur the employee to address personal issues that are affecting their performance
    • It may prompt the employee to request accommodations that are necessary and will help the employee succeed
    • It may prompt a discussion whether the employee is in the right position
  – Training on employee disciplinary process later today, with a stand-alone session for supervisors on October 12, 2017
• Does any of this apply to faculty?
  – Yes. There are conduct rules for faculty, namely, the UWM Code of Conduct and Faculty Document No. 2229 (as well as subject-specific P&P)
  – They should be held to the performance standards set by your department.
  – The post-tenure review process does not mean that faculty are exempt from review or legitimate performance expectations in the interim.
When Issues Arise: Getting Help

- How to have difficult conversations
  - Structure: have an agenda, let the employee know what you’ll be discussing so they can be prepared (and aren’t terrified)
  - Don’t make it personal, i.e., don’t blame or attack
  - Use data – what are the performance metrics at issue?
  - Consider adding someone else to the meeting if it won’t be counterproductive or intimidating
  - Employees may bring a support person/governance rep/attorney to pre-disciplinary/investigatory meetings, but they may not bring such people to ordinary meetings with their supervisor(s) even if the topic is their performance
  - Follow up with a written summary of the meeting, anything that was agreed to, and next steps, if any
When Issues Arise: Getting Help, cont.

• Assistance is available
  – Talk to your unit’s personnel representative (PREP), especially if there are any medical absences or leave involved
  – For disability and accommodation issues, consult UWM’s ADA Coordinator (in HR)
  – Consult HR
  – Consult Legal Affairs, particularly if you’re concerned about a complaint or potential litigation
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