January 31, 2013

Honorable Trustees:

In the book Good to Great, Jim Collins speaks of leadership being about vision, but being equally important is creating a “climate where the truth is heard and the brutal facts confronted.” Collins goes on the say that there is a difference in being able to voice your opinion and actually being heard. Good-to-great leaders realize the difference and work to create a culture where people have the opportunity to speak truthfully and be heard (Collins, p.74). This is the type of culture I want for all staff at NC State University.

Organizations, like the NC State Staff Senate, can be “powerful tools” for hearing those voices and creating change and achieving purposes, but they are also “dependent on their environment for needed support and resources,” (Bolman & Deal, p. 246). The NC State Staff Senate appreciates the recognition of our University’s administration on the value staff add to our campus and in effectively planning for the future by supporting our everyday efforts within the University’s policies and procedures and through participation, attendance and financial support at University and Senate sponsored events.

A 2002 study of 115 human resources professionals revealed that only 31 (27%) devoted time to strategic planning as a tactic to proactively forecast changing service needs and/or address agency problems. The study also showed that “the challenges today are still the challenges of yesterday–greater demand for services but lack of resources and committed staff, low morale, competition and funding problems, and a crises-oriented environment,” (Hyde & Hopkins  p.10). NC State is fortunate that our leadership is forward thinking and working to address campus wide issues that effect students, staff and faculty.

However, at the beginning of this academic year I realized many of the same problems continue to affect staff year after year. In order to try to combat these challenges I examined the recommended practices of reframing organizations specialists, Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal, and formulated a four frames approach to evaluating a couple of the issues that currently present themselves to the Senate and staff at NC State University. The four frames approach includes looking into issues through the following lenses: Structural, Human Resources, Political and Symbolic. It is by taking a problem and thoroughly investigating it through these four frames that is the most effective way to help an organization and its members.
Utilizing these practices, while evaluating the University’s strategic plan to see where staff can have the most influence, has led the Staff Senate to focus primarily on item four of the plan ("Enhance organizational excellence by creating a culture of constant improvement") in hopes to resolve some of the issues staff face regarding inclusion and feeling a sense of community and connectedness within the University.

Examining these issues has led the Staff Senate to collaborate with University Athletics – Women’s Basketball and the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity to host and Employee Appreciation Day event at the Duke vs NC State Basketball Game in which we had **646 people** to register with approximately 500 to attend. The Senate is also collaborating with the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (ComPsych) to provide employees the opportunity to attend face-to-face personal improvement seminars such as “Becoming a Cyber-Savvy Parent,” “How to Get Out of Debt While Achieving Wealth,” and “The New Realities of Home Ownership,” and with more to come. **Over 100 people** registered for the “Get Out of Debt” seminar alone. Keeping in mind that many of our colleagues are in the counties and at the research stations, we are offering some programs as webinars for their benefit.

Throughout the month of February we will be engaged in the UNC Staff Assembly’s month of service through the “Have A Heart Campaign.” During this time we will be collecting canned goods and non-perishable food items across campus for the “Feed the Pack” on-campus food pantry and the Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC. Employees in the counties and research stations will be collecting for their local food banks and pantries. Our theme for this event, **“NC State University: Caring for the Heart of North Carolina for 125 Years.”**

By working with various units to offer these services and special activities, the Staff Senate hopes to create a community of “oneness” and give employees an opportunity to learn and socialize together, as well as work together in the daily operation of the University.

Bolman and Deal state that leaders can serve an important role in leading their organizations when they “search for the spirit within and (create) a community of believers united by shared faith and shared culture,” (p. 291 ). We, the NC State Staff Senate, are a community with a shared culture and we look forward to continuing to do our part in “creating a culture of constant improvement” for staff, students and faculty across NC State University.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Colby
Staff Senate 2012-13
NC State University