Motivation

- Since 2012, LET has administered an annual Work Life Satisfaction Survey (WLSS). The purpose of this survey is assess organizational morale and effectiveness in a number of domains. Responders rate their level of agreement to a number of statements and are allotted space to provide anonymous comments. One area of focus in the WLSS is Diversity (the table to the right features the questions asked of responders). LET has consistently missed target goals in this domain for each question asked since the inception of the survey.

- Some of the anonymous composite comments from the Diversity domain were either very negative or displayed confusion, apathy, and even suspicion of diversity efforts. For example, comments occurring in multiple years suggest that some responders believe that efforts to recruit a diverse workforce would produce worse or less qualified employees in our organization. It became clear that in order to bring about positive change, some intervention was required that allowed for discussion and shared professional development.

- The LET Diversity Council decided to produce an outreach event to help address some of the data reflected in the WLSS. The outreach event occurred in March 2016, and the WLSS was administered again in April. The details of the intervention and discussion of its impact can be found on the reverse of this handout. The original poster that this handout accompanies can be viewed at this link: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/letfspubs/62

Historical Results

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1. I am familiar with LET’s guiding principles and goals regarding diversity
2. LET’s guiding principles and goals on diversity are consistent with my own
3. LET’s diversity programs and initiatives seek to enhance the diversity of our environment
4. LET values diversity in its workforce
5. My co-workers value diversity
6. LET creates a comfortable environment for diverse faculty and staff
7. LET is effective in recruiting a diverse faculty and staff
8. LET’s recruiting efforts have resulted in a diverse faculty and staff
9. I understand the mission of the Diversity Council and how it is engaged with the university’s diversity effort
**Intervention in Detail**

In an effort to help the organization come to a mutual understanding around the topic of diversity, the LET Diversity Council produced an outreach event in March, 2016. The following learning objectives were established for the 2.5 hour program:

- Participants will have a shared understanding of what is meant by ‘diversity’ in LET
- Participants will understand the importance/impact of diversity within a workplace
- Participants will feel comfortable discussing issues about diversity in the local and broader landscape

Recognizing that these are somewhat abstract goals, the Council also established two concrete outcomes:

1. LET values diversity as reflected in the work of the Mission, Vision, Values Task Force
2. Demonstrate that the LET diversity council can be a resource in planning events, recruitment, and planning initiatives

The following is an outline of the event:

- (15 min) Whiteboard Q&A around the room - what do you think diversity means? What does it mean at LET? What should it mean at LET? What value is there in a diverse workplace? How do you think diversity efforts are supported within LET?
- (15 min) Small group discussion around the white boards.
- (15 min) Large discussion to populate a large whiteboard with objectives.
- Lunch
- Ted Talk at 12:30 and discussion
- (15 min) Bringing it all together – discussion
- Closing remarks from the Dean

The opening activity was very well-received as people appreciated answering the prompts via whiteboard instead of verbal discussion. The micro/macro discussion groups drove the direction of the rest of the event. Another key component of the event was the Dean’s presence and genuine engagement with the program. This helped send a message that this topic is important to the leadership of the organization.

**Discussion**

While there were gains in some areas of the WLSS, Questions 5 and 6 performed worse than the previous two years (noted by the red and blue lines in the diagram above). We cannot draw any definitive correlation between the outreach event and the performance of the WLSS, as there are too many other variables involved. Questions 1, 3, and 9 align most closely with the outcomes of the March event and did outperform previous years. This progress is tempered by the most recent set of comments, which still indicate some level of confusion, resistance, and apathy about diversity-enhancement efforts. These comments point to issues for the Diversity Council to address in the future.

LET leadership recently articulated “diversity” as an organizational value, which is a promising first step. A manifestation of that value is a new standing item in the weekly LET News Digest, wherein the Council provides an announcement, resource, or conversation starter to share with the organization. Solidifying diversity as a core, normative value of the organization is a goal that we will continue to work towards. Promoting the visibility of inclusive and diverse resources is one method of norming the culture.