Employee and Labor Relations

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **NMSU Executive Team**

FROM: **Maura Gonsior, Director, Employee & Labor Relations**

DATE: **July 8, 2021**

SUBJECT: **Staff Performance Evaluation Process Improvement - Recommendations**

The Staff Performance Evaluation Process Improvement Committee
Gena Jones – Sponsor
Maura Gonsior – Project Leader
Kristin Ludwig - University Advancement
Pamela Jeffries - Enterprise IT
Rich Chavez - Enterprise App Administration
Jack Kirby - Environmental Health & Safety
Donna Ottaviano – Employee & Labor Relations
Anthony Parra - NMDA
Jennifer Gabel - CLPD
Dennis Giever - Academic Department Head
Joseph Almaguer - Employee Council
Yvonne Mendoza – AFSCME (Union)
Juanita Garcia - Carlsbad Campus

Background
The current staff performance management process consists of an annual performance review resulting in qualitative and quantitative performance ratings. Strategic Goals do not effectively align with performance goals, and vary widely by department, as do performance ratings. Ongoing performance feedback is limited throughout the year. Many employees do not view the evaluations as valuable.

Mission
Execute a comprehensive, yet focused and effective, integrated approach to staff contributions in reaching and sustaining NMSU's strategic mission and goals; cascading LEADS 2025 goals down to department and individual goals through implementation of a more robust performance management process.

Timeline
- Committee met weekly starting on February 10, 2021, to review current process and provide feedback.
- Enhancements to be implemented by next performance evaluation cycle (December 2021).

Strategic Alignment
Leads 2025 Strategic Goal 4 – Built a Robust University System

Measures
- Evaluation completion rate
- Accuracy of goal alignment data
- Effective assessment of goal alignment data
- Standardization and consistency in performance ratings
- Effectiveness as a performance management tool

Objectives
1. Review current process and identify opportunities for enhancements.
   - ICT made improvements to the evaluation system before the 2021 performance evaluation period to align performance goals to LEADS 2025 goals. As a result, we were able to pull data from the system. Data showed inconsistent performance ratings and goal alignment.
   - The system should drive the process. Manual workarounds, such as removing some second level approvals, do not improve efficiency.
   - The committee reviewed the self-evaluation forms and the performance evaluation forms and identified ways to simplify as well as combine the exempt and non-exempt form into a single form for all staff.
   - The committee reviewed recommendations from the 2018-2019 Staff Performance Evaluation Process Improvement effort.

2. Review relevant policies and procedures.
   - In review of ARP 9.01 – Staff Probationary Period, the committee identified clarifying language to include in policy and questioned the subsequent probationary period for exempt employees, with the concern that it may hinder career paths and succession planning. As exception to policy, many employees' subsequent probationary periods were waived this year in anticipation of layoffs.
   - In review of ARP 9.05 – Staff Performance Evaluation, the committee identified gaps in purpose as well as conflicts with the current process.

- Per the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 27 – Performance Evaluation, Bargaining Unit Employees' evaluations are required to have second level approval. The CBA ratings and performance elements, recommended for both exempt and non-exempt employees by the 2018-2019 process improvement committee, could not be implemented at the time of the Agreement, so an Amendment to the Agreement was established, confirming NMSU's commitment to implement the new ratings and performance elements when feasible.

3. Research best practices.
   - The committee reviewed best practice from other institutions, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and College and University Professional Association (CUPA-HR).
   - The committee reviewed literature, based on research, about the pros and cons of various rating scales and what scale is appropriate for each type of performance element.
   - The committee reviewed other platforms, including SABA and Ellucian Talent Management, and determined that a new platform could not be implemented by the next performance management cycle. However, a new platform could be considered during the RFP timeframe for a new Applicant Tracking System.
   - Research shows that employees become less engaged after an annual performance review, even if their ratings are high. Therefore, the evaluation focus should be on the future and ongoing feedback should be given to employees throughout the year.

4. Obtain feedback from employees and employee groups on possible enhancements.
   - Supervisors and employees were surveyed in 2019, 2020 and 2021. Performance evaluation survey data confirmed the committee's recommendations as well as a high level of satisfaction with the current system. The data showed that many employees are unfamiliar with LEADS 2025.
   - The Executive Team was given the opportunity to provide feedback and the committee took that feedback into consideration. Feedback included:
       - Eliminating the subsequent probationary period for exempt staff, as it hinders career paths and succession planning.
       - Adding a Performance Summary free-text section at the end of the evaluation form.
       - The simpler the process is, the better it is, keeping in mind that middle managers need more guidance.

5. Implement enhancements prior to next evaluation cycle.
   - The committee developed an "ICT Wish List" of desired enhancements to the system. Each enhancement was prioritized according to impact and feasibility for implementation by the next performance evaluation cycle, December, 2021.

Recommendations
In accordance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the committee recommends the following language changes to the ratings, performance elements and draft rating descriptions in the electronic Staff Performance Evaluation Form:

Collective Bargaining Agreement Performance Ratings

1- <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u>. Performance fails to meet minimum expectations for this role, and immediate and sustained improvement is required.
2- <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u>. Performance does not consistently meet or occasionally falls below what is required of the position; improvement in specific areas is required.
3- <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u>. Performance consistently meets the critical requirements of the position, continually achieves preset goals, and performs with distinction. Incumbent performance is reliable and consistent in adding value to the work unit.
4- <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u>. Performance is continually and consistently superior, and regularly goes beyond what is expected. An exceptional contributor whose performance exceeds expectations on a consistent and sustainable basis.
5- <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u>. Clearly and consistently demonstrates extraordinary and exceptional accomplishment in all major areas of responsibility. Performs above and beyond expectations under exceptional circumstances during the review period. Others in similar roles rarely equal performance of this caliber.

Collective Bargaining Agreement Performance Elements/ Core Competencies

Achievement toward NMSU Strategic Goals
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Is not aware of the University's strategic goals and objectives.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – May not fully understand the University's strategic goals and objectives or how their job aligns to them.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Understands goals and objectives of the University; measures outcomes; uses feedback to redirect as needed; evaluates alternatives; is solutions oriented. Demonstrates execution of goals and objectives that support the overall success of University goals.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Aligns priorities and work with the broader goals; seeks alternatives and broad input; work impacts progress toward strategic goals and objectives.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Work affects significant impact and progress toward strategic goals and objectives.

Collaboration and Teamwork

1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Performs tasks in isolation; does not share information or expertise with others when needed. Gives little consideration to how decisions impact others.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – Frequently fails to share information or expertise with others when needed; usually cooperative with direct team members, but does not cooperate with other teams or departments.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Communicates openly and respectfully when addressing problems with team members. Shares information and expertise to help achieve goals. Consistently works with others to complete tasks.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Initiates collaboration and effectively contributes to team performance and morale, even during periods of increased pressure or heavy workload.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Put team success ahead of personal success. Puts NMSU's success ahead of department or business team success. Coaches less experienced members and motivates them to achieve common goals.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Occasionally exhibits poor judgement or has difficulty making routine decisions.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> - May exhibit poor judgement or fail to bring concerns to a higher authority when appropriate.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Demonstrates good judgement in resolving routine problems; brings concerns to a higher authority when appropriate.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Uses sound judgement and effective use of resources in resolving problems; demonstrates good understanding of the larger issues related to the problem or concern.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Makes effective decisions and recommendations; demonstrates and ability to understand and approach a problem from various viewpoints. Takes appropriate initiatives in trying to resolve problems.

Interpersonal Effectiveness

1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Appears unprofessional or negative while interacting with others; shows insensitivity or disrespect to others.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – Interactions occasionally seem negative or unprofessional; sometimes appears insensitive or disrespectful to others.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Consistently communicates with others in a professional, pleasant and cooperative manner; works effectively with co-workers and others.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Regularly demonstrates willingness to compromise and is understanding of others' viewpoint.

5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Extremely professional and positive in communications and working relationships with all constituents.

Job Mastery
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the job and/or its purpose or impact on others.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – Demonstrates limited understanding of the job and/or its purpose or impact on others; displays inconsistent application of knowledge.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Demonstrates knowledge and skills necessary to perform the functions of the job.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Displays solid job knowledge; contributes to the goals and mission of the department/ organizational unit.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Extremely knowledgeable; respected as a valuable resource; consistently contributes to the department's and organizational unit's mission.

Organizational Awareness
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Unfamiliar with key decision makers and contacts; does not understand or operate effectively within the programs, policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the University.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – Does not always demonstrate a full understanding of the University's processes and procedures; is still learning how to find policies, important contacts and services.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Effectively uses both formal and informal channels or networks for acquiring information, assistance and accomplishing work goals. Ensures due diligence by keeping informed of University business and operational plans, policies and practices.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Identifies key decision makers and influencers and is highly effective in using networks for accomplishing work goals. Proactively stays informed of policy and processes and communicates this information to others. Supports the changing culture and methods of operating, if necessary, for the success of the University.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the University's mission and functions, and how its social, political, cultural, and technological systems work and operates highly effectively within them. Leads efforts and effectively manages change in culture and methods of operating for success of the University.

Resource Management
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Demonstrates lack of attention to resource management, or excessive attention which may hinder quality or productivity of department. Demonstrates unwillingness to improve process efficiency.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – Occasionally demonstrates inadequate or inappropriate attention to resource management (either inattention or excessive attention). Demonstrates reluctance to improve process efficiency.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Is knowledgeable about equipment, materials, processes and other available resources. Operates within budgetary constraints and focuses on efficient processes and productivity.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Frequently seeks enhancements that will improve productivity and effectively balances operating needs with budgetary constraints.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Maintains significant and up-to-date knowledge about available resources; continually seeks improvements and efficiency, as well as constructive cost efficiencies.

Results Orientation and Execution
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Often lags behind, has a backlog of work, or produces less than expected.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – Inconsistent in the volume of work produced and/or regularly produces somewhat less than expected.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> –Completes the expected amount of work.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Completes regular assignments efficiently and is able to produce more than expected.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Completes an impressive volume of work; continually seeks new ways of gaining efficiency.

Self-Awareness and Accountability
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> – Often needs guidance, direction or reminders regarding work; fails to act on current opportunities to improve work processes.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> - Occasionally fails to follow through on tasks or seek necessary guidance; resists acting on current opportunities to improve work processes.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Follows through to meet schedules, goals or deadlines with minimal supervision. Appropriately seeks guidance when necessary.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Completes work independently; rarely needs reminders or guidance to complete regular tasks; seeks additional skill, information, etc. to ensure high quality.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Takes responsibility for all aspects of job; exhibits creativity and self-initiative in seeking out improvements or enhancements to work.

Service and Quality Focus
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> –Errors or omissions are often evident; work frequently needs to be corrected, re-done or double checked. Fails to recognize the importance of service. Consistently shows lack of concern and courtesy. Fails to offer assistance in response to customer service needs.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> – Errors and omissions occur more often than is acceptable; inconsistent quality of work. Occasionally demonstrates lack of concern and courtesy; inconsistent in demonstrating responsiveness to customer needs.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Is usually accurate and thorough in performance of duties; demonstrates concern for quality. Consistently demonstrates concern and courtesy. Regularly demonstrates an understanding of the issues and service needs of the customer.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Makes an extra effort to ensure that work is of the proper quality; checks for accuracy if needed. Actively seeks opportunities to provide quality service. Effectively identifies service needs and responds appropriately.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Work is of high quality; errors or omissions are extraordinarily rare. Extremely professional and positive in providing service even when dealing with difficult situations. Teaches or demonstrates to others how to deal effectively and positively with customer service needs.

Valuing Diversity and Inclusion
1. <u>Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance</u> –Does not welcome input and may show disrespect for others based on differences; is not culturally competent.
2. <u>Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement</u> - May not fully understand the value of diverse perspectives; does not always welcome ideas different from one's own; is not familiar with diversity related terms.
3. <u>Successful/Effective Performance</u> – Shows respect for people and their differences; works to understand the perspective of others; demonstrates cultural competency. Welcomes ideas that are different from one's own.
4. <u>Superior/Highly Effective Performance</u> – Engages the talents, experiences and capabilities of others; promotes fairness and equity; creates opportunities for access and success on the basis of equal opportunity.
5. <u>Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status</u> – Actively engages in the diversity effort; mentors others; drives positive change at the university; is a spokesperson for diversity issues not necessarily one's own; communicates and educates.

The committee also recommends an additional performance element/core competency for those employees who supervise others. This will populate only on supervisors' performance evaluation forms:

Leadership

1. Unsuccessful/Unacceptable Performance – Demonstrates a lack of respect to employees, and ineffective communication and team building, resulting in a lack of trust and respect from employees. Does not delegate tasks, empower employees or hold themselves or employees accountable for their work.

2. Partially Successful Performance/Needs Improvement -Still learning how to manage people; sometimes micro-manages or does not have effective communication with employees. Needs to focus on building trust and stronger teams; must learn to show respect, delegate tasks and empower employees. Inconsistently holds themselves and employees accountable for their work.

3. Successful/Effective Performance – Effectively manages employee performance; holds employees accountable to their work; works to build mutual trust and respect. Provides clear communication and guidance to set expectations. Delegates tasks and empowers employees to do good work.

4. Superior/Highly Effective Performance – Empowers, coaches, mentors and provides employees with resources; builds trust, mutual respect and highly effective teams; holds themselves and employees accountable to a high standard of performance.

5. Distinguished Performance and Role Model Status – Demonstrates highly effective leadership and great respect for others; motivates and empowers employees to perform at a significantly high level; has earned the highest respect and trust from members of the university community.

Policy Changes

The committee recommends the attached changes to ARP 9.01 – Staff Probationary Period and ARP 9.05 – Staff Performance Evaluation to remove the subsequent probationary period for exempt staff, to fill in gaps in purpose and to align with the current process.

Self-Assessment Form

The committee has made recommended changes to the Staff Self-Assessment Form, attached. The form has been simplified and modified for the appropriate use of both non-exempt and exempt staff.

ICT will not be able to incorporate a self-assessment section in the system; however, they can add a link in the electronic evaluation form to access the Self-Assessment Form.

The committee highly recommends that supervisors use this form and ELR Staff Performance Evaluation Training can address this.

System Enhancements

The following are additional enhancements to the electronic evaluation form that ICT should be able to complete by the next performance cycle (see attached ICT Wish List):

- A link to Training Central to view training and professional development plans

- A link to HRS position descriptions
- Add a "canceled" category to the performance goals ratings, which will not penalize the employee (similar to the "deferred" rating)
- Add a Performance Summary free-text section at the end of the form
- Areas of Improvement flow over to populate in the next year's evaluation form
- Automatic email reminders (through BCM) to review and provide feedback on the progress of performance goals

Second Level Signature

The committee does not recommend removing the second level approval in the evaluation system:

- The Collective Bargaining Agreement requires that all Bargaining Unit Employee (non-exempt) performance evaluations have second level approval.
- The second-level approval contributes to a level of accountability and validity of the evaluation given by the supervisor.
- Last cycle, ELR manually removed the second level approval function from certain senior level employees, a very time-consuming process. Continuing this practice would be inefficient and misaligned with process improvement.

Staff Performance Evaluation Training

Survey data and performance evaluation data showed that employees are unfamiliar with LEADS 2025 and do not understand how to align performance goals with LEADS 2025 Goals. Performance evaluation data showed widespread inconsistency in rating employee performance. Therefore, training should include departmental synergy around the performance evaluation process, promoting a management team effort to ensure consistency, fairness and productivity. Training should emphasize goal alignment and how to rate performance appropriately, as well as the importance of the self-assessment and providing ongoing coaching and feedback to employees throughout the year. It may be possible to develop mini training modules on how to use the Staff Performance Evaluation System.

Attachments:
Draft changes to ARP 9.01 – Staff Probationary Period
Draft changes to ARP 9.05 – Staff Performance Evaluation
Draft Staff Self-Assessment Form
ICT Wish List
1st Amendment to CBA