Employee Resource Groups

Whatcom Community College

PURPOSE OF EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) provide forums for employees to gather and share ideas about matters that affect their professional development and work at Whatcom Community College (WCC). WCC administration is supportive of a system of Employee Resource Groups that contribute to the following:

- Foster employee development
- Contribute to the College’s commitment to advancing social equity, while challenging systems of power, privilege and inequities
- Strengthen networking and cohesiveness across the College, and promote career and professional development
- Provide important feedback to management and assist with efforts to attract and retain highly qualified candidates for employment at WCC

Because of the benefits to the workplace and contribution to the College’s commitment to advancing social equity, Employee Resource Groups are welcomed and will be provided access to the resources listed in accordance with Whatcom Community College policies and procedures.

Formation and Organization

Employee Resource Groups are employee-formed and employee-led. Employee Resource Groups must:

1. Be formed around a shared characteristic or common interest that can positively affect professional development, retention, and the College’s strategic plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, being a working parent, veteran status, or caring for aging family members while working.

2. Be open to all College non-student employees and non-student volunteers. As required by state and federal law and College policy, Employee Resource Groups may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, veteran’s status, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.

3. Adhere to all College policies. http://whatcom.edu/about-the-college/policies-procedures

4. Be composed of only College non-student employees and non-student volunteers. Guest speakers may be invited to Employee Resource Group meetings.

5. As required by the Executive Ethics Act, Employee Resource Groups may not use College resources to support or oppose any ballot proposition or candidate for public office. Additionally, Employee Resource Groups may not be formed to promote or benefit any private company or organization.
6. Employees interested in forming an Employee Resource Group should complete an Employee Resource Group Application. The application is then submitted to the Executive Director for Human Resources for ethics compliance and then forwarded to the Employee Resource Group Support Team whose responsibility is to provide advocacy, support, and guidance for ERGs. The ERG Support Team will work closely with the Executive Director for Human Resources to finalize groups based upon guidelines and criteria. Employees must articulate how the group’s formation relates to professional development, retention, and the College’s strategic plan.

7. **Employee Resource Group Leads** must create a legacy document or brief annual summary that includes the name of the lead contact for the following year, number of meetings held, participant names, and highlights from the previous year related the strategic plan, retention, professional development, and/or the group’s goals.

**College Resources for Employee Resource Groups Guidance**

Employee Resource Groups are encouraged to communicate suggestions for improvements in College practices to the Diversity Committee or by contacting a member of the President’s Cabinet or supervisor. Employee Resource Group members may also be asked by the College to help reach particular audiences or assist in expanding the applicant pool during employee recruitment activities.

Employee Resource Groups are welcomed, but not supervised, by the College. Their meetings and ongoing efforts positively affect the work environment and contribute to College core values and strategic planning goals, including helping to recruit and retain a high quality, highly skilled workforce (providing employees with the skills, knowledge and tools they need to be successful, and promoting social equity, inclusiveness and cultural competence across the organization.)

The College believes that Employee Resource Group meetings and mentoring and training activities enhance employee professional development, contribute to one’s professional role in the College, and are reasonably related to a number of other official College purposes. In accordance with State Ethics rules, Employee Resource Groups are authorized to make use of the following state resources for the listed purposes:

**Physical Space**

1. College shared space, including conference and break rooms may be used for group meetings on a space available basis. Because shared space is limited and priority for use must be given to the performance of College business, it is possible that a scheduled College business meeting may take priority over Employee Resource Groups meeting as necessary for College business.

2. Other college space (generally office space or cubicles) may be used when providing mentoring.

**Employee Time**

1. While most meetings will occur during lunch breaks and after hours, some meetings, informal mentoring and training may occur during regular working hours. Employees are asked to work with their supervisor for approval for any additional time during regular working hours for ERG related activities. Time allotted for participation can be adjusted per supervisor’s approval on a case-by-case basis.

2. Employees preparing meeting agendas and/or training materials may use work time to prepare.
3. Participation in Employee Resource Group activities may not interfere with the performance of the employee’s regularly assigned duties.

4. While supervisor approval is not required to join an Employee Resource Group, employees may wish to make their supervisors aware of their participation in an ERG. Where an employee’s performance is affected by participation, employees and supervisors should consult with Human Resources and may limit use of work time on Employee Resource Group activities in order to improve performance.

**Computer, Electronic Mail, and Telephones**

1. College computers may be used to prepare meeting agenda and/or training materials.

2. Email and phones may be used to hold meetings by teleconference, convey information about upcoming meetings, communicate with one another between meetings, communicate with speakers or potential speakers, and provide advice and mentoring to others.

3. A designated Whatcom Community College webpage, found on the Human Resources page, may be used to make the application process accessible and transparent, promote the Employee Resource Groups to prospective and current staff and faculty, and facilitate the application process.

The College anticipates that some Employee Resource Groups and/or Employee Resource Group members will ask to participate, or be invited to participate, in the development of College-sponsored training programs and in College outreach and recruitment. When Employee Resource Group members are involved in such College management approved training or recruitment and outreach they are performing College assigned work. As such, they will be able to make use of the same resources provided any employee performing their assigned tasks.