

KSG New Work Systems at Harvard (NWSH)

Overview

A union-management group has recently been formed at the Kennedy School to develop a new model for Faculty support. It will work over the next two years to study the Faculty Assistant positions, services provided to Faculty and the administrative processes performed by Faculty Assistants. The goals are to improve service to the faculty and to improve the working conditions, resources and relationships involved in the Faculty Assistant role. While the project will not impact the allocation of support to Faculty, it will address the way those services are provided. The recommendations that come out of this process will be implemented in stages over these next two years.

Background

Harvard University and the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW) are jointly sponsoring a process called New Work Systems at Harvard (NWSH) to improve the work environment of managers and staff. NWSH is an effort to make changes in work organization and decision-making that are creative, significant and structural. This approach seeks to enhance the commitment, involvement and performance of the workforce through proven design elements that typically include participation in decision-making, team-based work organization, an emphasis on skills training, and rewards and recognition. The overall goal of the NWSH process is to make Harvard work better and make Harvard a better place to work.

The University Joint Council (UJC) is a university-level labor management oversight group whose members are the officers and senior staff of HUCTW and senior management from both central administration and the schools. In 2000, it set up a university-level joint group, the NWSH Steering Committee, to oversee the process throughout Harvard. The steering committee has developed a set of guidelines for the NWSH pilots and will continue to provide oversight by setting direction, approving local designs, acting as a resource and evaluating pilot sites.

The KSG NWSH Design Process

At the Kennedy School, a NWSH Design Team representing Faculty Assistants, KSG administration and union representatives has been formed. The team is sponsored by KSG Executive Dean Bonnie Newman and HUCTW staff member Marie Manna. The team received team skills training in May 2003 and began meeting to review the current operation, services, and work environment of Faculty Assistants. It will also learn about the basic design concepts involved in New Work Systems at Harvard. After this study is completed, the committee will develop a plan to apply these design concepts in creating a new model for supporting faculty while making Faculty Assistants' work environment more satisfying.

The redesign plan may include some or all of the following areas: services provided, work processes, information systems, job descriptions, leadership roles, decision making, rewards and recognition, training and career development.

During the study, design, and implementation phases, the committee will directly involve the Faculty Assistants as well as other support services such as the Course Material Office, the Office of Financial Services, KSG Library, Room Reservations and Facilities, etc. This involvement may include interviews, focus groups, surveys, inviting department and center representatives to particular meetings, and membership on sub-committees. The NWSH Design Team will provide vehicles for faculty feedback, ideas and suggestions and keep the Faculty and Faculty Assistants informed on a consistent basis. Restructuring Associates Inc., an outside consulting firm chosen by the University Joint Council, will assist the committee in its study, planning, and implementation.

The Design Team will share their recommendations with the Faculty Assistants for final feedback before submitting them to the Sponsors. The recommendations will then be made to the Sponsors for final review. After consulting with others as appropriate, which may include the Dean, Academic Dean, Faculty Assistants, Faculty, HUCTW Representatives, Office of Human Resources and other KSG offices, the Executive Dean will make final decisions on the group's recommendations. Subsequently, the Sponsors will develop an implementation process that will include the appropriate administrative offices, individuals or work teams identified in the recommendations.

In addition, the university-level NWSH Steering Committee will review and approve the proposed design for consistency with NWSH Guidelines.

NWSH Design Team members include:

Michael Blackmore	Faculty Assistant
Bill Cain	Assistant Director, Human Resources
Marsha Frazier	Faculty Assistant
Kathleen Kaminski	Faculty Assistant
Miriam Leibowitz	HUCTW Staff Member
Maureen Mahoney	Faculty Assistant Group Leader
Megan Sampson	Faculty Assistant

This project will succeed only with community input. We welcome your thoughts, questions or suggestions. Please contact any member of the design team.