

MANAGING AN EFFECTIVE DEPARTMENT ORIENTATION

Do you remember your first day on the job? Were you confident or anxious? Were you introduced around? Did you feel welcomed and informed? Did you feel you had all the information necessary to perform your job satisfactorily? Did you understand what was expected of you? Chances are, your early experiences help shaped your impressions and perceptions about your work, colleagues and the University in general.

Most employees begin their new job feeling a bit anxious. They worry about how their supervisor and colleagues will receive them and they worry about measuring up to their new job duties and expectations. They have many questions about their work environment, university policies and procedures, benefits and services and the overall culture and climate of the University.

Effectively orienting new employees does take considerable time and effort, but the time invested will pay huge dividends. A positive transition can leave a lasting impression with a new employee for years to come, but negative impressions brought about by bad experiences with colleagues, unclear expectations and an unpleasant work environment are next to impossible to undo.

Additionally, employees tend to establish either good or bad patterns early in their employment. Once bad work habits or unacceptable job performance are tolerated or become ingrained, they are hard to change. University orientation programs and resources can help with the transition, but steering employees onto desirable paths is the primary responsibility of supervisors and managers.

An Effective Departmental Orientation:

- Creates a favorable impression of the University and the employee's work environment.
- Introduces the employee to departmental goals, policies, procedures and protocols.
- Conveys the supervisor or manager's expectations.
- Assist employees in developing quality working relationships with colleagues, supervisors and students.
- Addresses the anxieties and uncertainties of the new employee's experience in the early stages of employment.
- Provide employees access to information and resources necessary to ease their transition into the workplace.
- Introduce employees to the benefits and support services available to help them maintain a high quality of life.
- Forges a "partnership" between the employee, the hiring department and other service units to help the employee become an effective member of the university community.

Conducting a Successful Departmental Orientation

(See: [Department Orientation Checklist](#))

Before the start date

- Give the employee a warm welcome by phone or in person. Verify the employee's actual start date, explain the hiring process and ask him or her to complete the New Employee Packet as soon as possible.
- Process documents in a timely and accurate manner so that the employee can access services and resources (CatCard, parking, keys etc.).
- Identify the employee's working space, necessary office supply and computer needs, voice messaging systems, computer accounts etc.
- Refer the employee to resource information (university policies, benefits/retirement information, services and resources) to help prepare him or her for the transition.

First days/employee welcome

- Meet with the employee (even better if you take him or her to lunch!).
- Give a brief overview of the structure and goals of the unit or department.
- Give the employee a job description and/or performance work plan.
- Discuss probationary requirements (if relevant) and the performance evaluation process. (when, how and by whom?).
- Discuss relevant office policies and protocols (work hours, flexible schedules, lunch and work breaks, pay check procedures, request for time off, etc.).
- Give the employee a tour of the facilities (include restrooms, break rooms, fire escapes and other safety information).
- Introduce employee to colleagues and other key lead managers.
- Give employee relevant written material, handbooks, policies manuals etc.
- Assign the employee a work "buddy" or someone to serve as a point of contact.

The early months

- Continually "check in" with your new employee to see how he or she is doing.
- Provide consistent feedback about work duties and be available for questions and concerns.
- Openly praise and/or reward good work performance as applicable.
- Conduct a performance review after the first three months.
- Work with employee to identify development needs and to establish a development plan.