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Perspective and Food For Thought: Staff-Faculty Relations Expert Visits Lehigh

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Over two days in mid-July, more than one hundred Lehigh staff members participated in workshops with noted staff-faculty relations expert **Susan Christy, Ph.D.** These sessions, jointly sponsored by the **Employee Relations Advisory Committee (ERAC)** and **Human Resources (HR)**, focused on staff-faculty partnerships, customer service, and managing in an academic environment.

"What inspires you in your work with faculty?"

It wasn't necessarily a question most participants in the "Staff-Faculty Partnerships" workshop were expecting, but their answers came quickly.

"I'm constantly learning," one staff member said. "The creativity," added another. Yet another noted, "I love brainstorming with faculty about big ideas."

Still, most in the room acknowledged that there can be obstacles along the way to those inspired moments. Dr. Christy's goal was to help staff members overcome the roadblocks to success. Some of these challenges are a result of very real differences between staff and faculty.

Christy asserts that these differences don't have to divide. Through insights into faculty motivations, stresses, and work styles, she believes staff can understand how to adjust their own behaviors to meet faculty "where they are."

For example, a faculty member facing the pressures of research, publishing, grant-writing, teaching, and grading may not have a travel reimbursement form at the top of his or her to-do list. So, how does a staff member get them to focus on that form or other administrative tasks?

During break-out sessions in the workshops, staff brainstormed strategies to better support faculty in these situations. As a result, some staff plan to change their own behaviors and approaches to their work. One noted that she would make greater use of calendars to help keep faculty on track with their events.

Others said they would:

- Adjust their communication style based on the preferences of the faculty member
- Be more pro-active in requests
- Communicate more.

The post-event evaluations suggest that Christy opened quite a few eyes. "Hearing all of Dr. Christy's insight provided so many of us with those 'Ah-ha! Moments,'" one attendee stated. "Staff was amazed at what faculty members do," noted another respondent.

"We All Are A Face of Lehigh"

Patti Glasgow from HR attended the "Customer Service Strategies" session. She said, "One thing that really stuck out was when customers need our services it is so important that we truly listen to what they are saying. Many times I am on the phone, listening with one ear and thinking about what is on my desk behind me. I can still help the person on the other line, but I am not really listening to what they need." She noted, "Susan offered ideas and techniques to ensure that you are fully concentrating on the person and what they are asking of you."

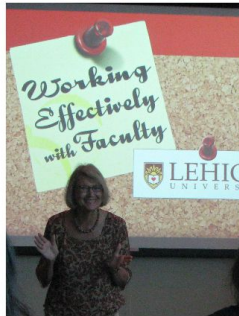
All of the workshops were interactive and participants worked together to develop ideas and share strategies. Some examples, culled from survey responses, included:

- "When pointing a customer in another direction for reply, I will try to follow up with them to make sure they have received an answer."
- "I think I will ask more questions to make sure that what they asked for is really what they wanted."

For one staff member, the key take-away was a reminder that "We all are a face of Lehigh."

Patricia Mann, Administrative Director of the Provost's Office, thought the "Managing in an Academic Environment" workshop was engaging and helpful. After the workshop, she told *Spotlight*, "What we do here is bring two diverse groups of people, faculty and staff, together for the greater good of the university," she continued, "Programs like this that add to the education and understanding around our differences will only help us collaborate more effectively."

Another participant summed it with this reflection: "Christy's sessions helped to remind us why we do what we do. We all love Lehigh University."



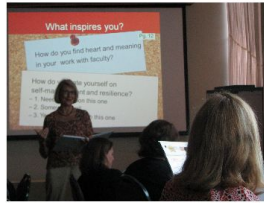
Christy's Book Available

Participants in Dr. Christy's workshops received a copy of her book *Working Effectively With Faculty: Guidebook for Higher Education Staff and Managers*. Copies of the book are currently available at the **Lehigh University Bookstore**. For a limited time, the bookstore is offering a significant discount off of the cover price.

Future Steps

The success of Dr. Christy's visit has encouraged the planning committee members - **Robin Armbruster, Jackie Matthews, Mary Jo McNulty, Debra Rubart, and Vivien Steel** -- to continue their efforts to foster more effective collaboration between faculty and staff. They invite faculty and staff to share

additional thoughts and suggestions with them. Stay tuned for news about upcoming activities.



HR News

Tuition Benefits

08/01/11

If you have college-bound children and need tuition benefit assistance, contact: Betty Konczyk, ext...

Floating Holidays

08/01/11

Remember to schedule your floating holidays for 2011-12. There are four this year that need to be ta...

TIAA-CREF Counselors on Campus

08/01/11

Need some retirement planning advice? TIAA-CREF counselors visit Lehigh once a month. Please note ...

[More HR News](#)

Workplace Learning & Wellness Programs

17 August 2011

The Lawful Leader: Harassment (Other Types) - from 11:30am until 1:00pm Where: T.B.A.

1 September 2011

Learning the Institution - from 9:00am until 10:00am Where: T.B.A.

15 September 2011

Plus of Us - from 9:00am until 10:30am Where: T.B.A.

20 September 2011

[View Full Calendar](#)

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