

2014 August Spotlight

By Carla Kologie, ERAC Chair

August is a good time to:

- sneak in a final vacation before classes start;
- enjoy the free concerts at Musikfest;
- shop for back-to-school deals;
- look back at last year's accomplishments and set goals for the coming year.

While I'm not sure how many of the above are on each ERAC member's August "to do" lists this year, I do know that we're all focusing on the last one.

ERAC's 18 members have been working over the summer to gear up for the coming year. As we prepare to clearly define ERAC's role in the campus community, we are committed to increasing dialogue among staff and opening up more channels for thoughtful and proactive communication.

Looking back, here are some of ERAC's accomplishments from the past year and goals moving forward:

Strategizing

ERAC restructured its committees and working groups and created two-year strategic plans with clearly identified goal and timelines.

In May, four focus group sessions allowed staff to share their opinions and concerns and offer suggestions about ERAC and its purpose.

In an effort to encourage campus leaders to consider the best interests of all staff in decision-making, ERAC sent several letters addressing concerns about specific events / announcements / issues.

In an effort to clearly define our mission, ERAC plans to share the focus group feedback with the campus community. This feedback will be used to shape ERAC's agenda this year as we identify ways to better support staff.

Collaborating

Nearly all ERAC members participated in the two-day VISIONS training to help gain an understanding of how we can contribute to creating a diverse, respectful campus community.

In an effort to facilitate campus networking and to discover collaborative opportunities, ERAC created a Campus Liaison program requiring each committee member to engage in regular communication with various programs/offices.

ERAC initiated long-term discussions with various campus organizations to look at current and future events, projects and communications, including the Council for Equity and Community, the Faculty and Staff of Color Network, the Faculty Compensation Committee, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the PRIDE Center for Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity and the Women's Center.

When President Gast announced her departure, ERAC advocated that a town hall for staff be part of the presidential search process and was pleased to co-sponsor the well-attended event that featured open and honest staff feedback.

ERAC will continue to develop and maintain campus-wide partnerships at all levels of the campus community. We look forward to working with Lehigh leadership during this time of transition.

Educating

REACH completed [another successful year](#) with two cohorts of staff representing various areas of the university. You can sign up to participate in this year's cohorts by [following this link](#).

ERAC now welcomes new hires during the new employee orientations.

This year's newly elected members were the first to experience an onboarding program that includes a mentoring program.

This spring's election was one of the largest on records with more than 40 staff members nominated and 18 who accepted and were on the ballot. More than 250 staff voted in our six new members.

We encourage all staff to learn more about ERAC. We will continue to find interesting and relevant topics around which to plan events and seek ways to create two-way conversations about staff issues. We recognize that clear, timely communication is crucial and will work to develop trusted outlets.

Connecting

ERAC hosted seven Brown Bag programs, averaging 50 staff in the various sessions.

More than 160 Lehigh employees and their families attended the Iron Pigs game in June.

ERAC will increase the number of opportunities for staff to join together to learn from and with the campus community.

Your ideas are not only welcomed, they're critical to ERAC's overall success. In the coming weeks, look for our roll-out of this year's plans and ways to contact your ERAC representatives.

Wishing you a happy end to the summer and a smooth transition into fall!