



Cornell University  
Library

# **CUL Task Force on Staff Inclusiveness Report**

**Presented for consideration by the University Librarian**

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## **Task Force**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the resolution passed by the Academic Assembly on September 8, 2008, and to findings in the ClimateQUAL survey and the report of the Strategic Alignment Group, a task force of academic and non-academic staff was formed to consider the possibilities of creating a climate of inclusiveness in CUL. Its purpose is to encourage all staff to become more engaged and actively contribute to the goals and mission of the library and the broader university community. In doing so, we have recognized the groundbreaking work done by the Strategic Alignment Group (SAG) and have tried not to repeat their efforts, but rather to point out our support of their results and build on them. The task force focused on formulating two interrelated recommendations and suggestions for strategies to implement them. To these we added several ideas for follow-up assessment to measure CUL's success in developing and maintaining an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

Our first recommendation is to create an overarching Library Forum, of which all CUL staff would be members. We propose a basic committee structure and mention the type of activities and programming that the Forum might undertake to invite attendance and participation by staff of all levels.

The second recommendation is to modify the scope and bylaws of the Academic Assembly so as to allow it to continue as a separate body that addresses issues that affect only academic staff. The Assembly would thus need to meet fewer times per year and provide less programming than it does currently.

We suggest a reassessment of the Assembly's standing committees and a redistribution of their responsibilities, retaining some in the purview of the Assembly and transferring others to the domain of the new Forum. We feel that career and professional development would be best served by revamping the current Assembly committee into one that would serve both academic and non-academic staff under the Forum. Bylaws for the Forum need to be formulated and the current bylaws of the Assembly modified to accommodate the new dual structure.

We outline the steps to be taken in implementing this revised structure if it is accepted by the University Librarian. In addition, we identify a few strategies for improving the climate of inclusiveness by providing opportunities for staff to share information and make connections and by supporting career and professional development opportunities. Of particular importance is garnering the support of senior and middle managers to encourage and reward staff participation in creating the dynamic of the new environment.

Finally, the task force feels it is essential that we assess the success of this initiative over time, not being too hasty and forming judgments too soon, as it takes a while to establish a comfortable and pervasive cultural base. We list a number of criteria for assessment.

Most immediately, the task force is prepared through a series of public hearings and a survey to assess the receptivity of staff to these recommendations and to play a role in their implementation.

## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The CUL Task Force on Inclusiveness was formed in October 2008 in response to the resolution passed by the Academic Assembly on September 8, 2008, and to findings in the ClimateQUAL survey and the report of the Strategic Alignment Group. The Task Force was **charged with recommending strategies to achieve greater staff inclusiveness throughout CUL**. All members of the task force (five academic and eight non-academic staff) were individuals who had responded to a library-wide request for volunteers. Several groups have wrestled with the issues of inclusiveness and engagement in CUL in recent years, including the Innovation Without Burnout Group and, most recently, the Strategic Alignment Group (SAG). In the reports of these groups, we see recommendations and options to make our organization—its policies, practices, and structures—more inclusive in order to allow individuals to be more engaged, productive, and innovative. We define inclusion and engagement in these terms:

*Inclusion:* Organizational climate created by policies, practices, and structures that encourage individuals to feel that they are valued members of the larger whole and thus increase their ability to contribute to the organization.

*Engagement:* Active participation and involvement of individuals in applying their skills to contribute to the goals of the organization.

If we are successful in removing organizational barriers to inclusion—those that limit or diminish staff contributions—we hope and expect staff to become more engaged. This is the basis for the working definition of inclusiveness that is part of our charge:

To provide *all* CUL staff with the opportunity to

- enhance their understanding of how CUL operates in the context of the greater information environment and CUL's goals and priorities
- be heard on issues important to CUL staff and the library
- be more engaged in the life of the broader library and university communities

While the task force was ramping up, SAG was wrapping up its excellent report, *An Opportunity to Challenge and Change the Status Quo* (rev. 10/23/08). The report lays out a series of options for engaging CUL staff in the implementation of the library's goals and objectives and identifies "aspects of our culture/working style that could be enhanced to improve overall results." In identifying ways to enhance CUL's organizational climate, communication, information gathering, assessment, rewards, and structure, SAG is, in fact, promoting inclusiveness.

Shortly after the release of the SAG report, the task force held a brainstorming session to generate strategies for achieving inclusiveness in CUL. Not surprisingly, many of the ideas on our list were already embodied in the SAG report. Rather than duplicate SAG's work, the task force culled a list of potential strategies we had brainstormed to eliminate

those that SAG had already identified. We endorse the recommendations put forth by SAG, and we intend to provide SAG with input as it develops an action plan.

In this report, although we have identified a few specific strategies to enhance inclusiveness that are not mentioned in the SAG report, we have focused our attention on two specific recommendations related to the issue that most directly resulted in the formation of our group.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: CREATE A LIBRARY FORUM**

Create a Library Forum charged with promoting inclusiveness throughout CUL. Specifically, the charge of the Library Forum is to

- provide all CUL staff with the opportunity to enhance their understanding of how CUL operates in the context of the greater information environment and its goals and priorities
- be heard on issues important to CUL staff and the library
- be more engaged in the life of the broader library and university communities

We propose a basic structure for the Library Forum but recognize that the final determination will depend on input from CUL administrators and staff.

- All CUL staff are members of the Library Forum.
- The University Librarian serves as chair of the Library Forum.
- The Library Forum Steering Committee consists of six members with a minimum of two academic and two non-academic staff members elected by CUL staff. The Steering Committee is responsible for the planning and programming of regular Library Forum meetings, as well as oversight of any standing or ad hoc committees created. Meetings might consist of in-house or guest speakers discussing emerging technologies, current trends in libraries and higher education, and issues specific to CUL (e.g., goals, budget, or the new library Web page) or to the university.

In addition, we recommend that

- the first Library Forum Steering Committee draft bylaws that address a variety of administrative issues, such as the minimum number of meetings per year, the creation of standing committees, the elections process, and term limits. Before they take effect, these bylaws must be approved by the University Librarian and by CUL staff.
- the maximum term of members be two years to provide the opportunity for more staff to participate.
- at least one standing committee, Career and Professional Development, be created as soon as possible to promote professional and career development programming for all staff.

We think that establishing the Library Forum would be appealing to CUL staff of all ranks and status, who would have the opportunity to attend and participate in programs that the Steering and other Library Forum committees develop and who could actively participate by serving on these committees without concern that their rank or status is a barrier. The elected Steering Committee would appoint volunteers to staff the committees.

At the same time, establishing a Library Forum along the lines proposed requires that administrators and supervisors recognize the value of involvement of their staff members in Library Forum activities and that they encourage such participation. Without this support, the Library Forum can not accomplish its mission.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: MODIFY THE SCOPE AND BYLAWS OF THE ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY**

The Academic Assembly should remain a separate body that addresses issues that affect only academic staff. These include but are not limited to “decisions relating to academic appointments, promotions, tenure, conditions of service and related matters of internal governance.”<sup>1</sup>

Currently, Academic Assembly monthly meetings deal with a variety of issues that pertain to staff of all ranks and statuses. These meetings are open to all staff, although many non-academic staff may not be aware of that fact, and those who are aware may be reluctant to attend. By moving responsibility for the programming to a more inclusive Library Forum Steering Committee, we hope to diminish a strongly felt barrier between academic and non-academic staff, and we acknowledge structurally that all staff have a shared interest in understanding CUL’s and the university’s mission and operations and the larger environment in which these entities operate.

Academic Assembly committees include Academic Personnel Policy (dealing with policies on appointment, promotion, and termination, etc.), Economic Status of Librarians (tracking salary data, etc. of academic library staff over time), and Professional Development (promoting and providing continuing education and professional development for CUL librarians and archivists). Academic Personnel Policy addresses issues pertaining only to academic staff. It may be practical to expand the scope of Economic Status of Librarians to cover other staff classifications and migrate it to the Library Forum. We believe that establishing a Career and Professional Development Committee under the aegis of the Library Forum would obviate the need for the Academic Assembly Professional Development Committee. The Career and Professional Development Committee of the Library Forum could take responsibility for the kind of programming now handled by the Professional Development Committee, such as professional development week, brown bag lunches, and happy hours.

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<sup>1</sup> Academic Assembly Bylaws, Article II, Section 2  
<[http://www.library.cornell.edu/staffweb/AcadAssem/AA\\_Bylaws.html](http://www.library.cornell.edu/staffweb/AcadAssem/AA_Bylaws.html)>.

Therefore, we suggest that the Academic Assembly be reconfigured in the following way, recognizing that this requires a vote by the Assembly membership to change the Academic Assembly bylaws.

- As is now the case, all CUL staff with academic appointments are members of the restructured Academic Assembly.
- The University Librarian serves as the chair (*no change from the current bylaws*).
- The Academic Assembly Steering Committee, elected by academic staff, consists of five members and a secretary. The Director of Library Human Resources serves as an ex-officio member. (*The addition of the director is a change from the current bylaws and recognizes a new responsibility for the committee, academic personnel policy.*)
- The charge of the Academic Assembly Steering Committee is to
  - assist and advise the chair in the preparation of the Assembly's agenda and in the scheduling of regular and any special meetings of the Assembly (*no change from the current Steering Committee charge*)
  - appoint members to such standing and ad hoc committees as may be directed by the Assembly (*no change from the current Steering Committee charge*)
  - take responsibility for
    - policies on appointment, promotion, and termination
    - grievance procedures
    - nomination of search committees and appointment of review boards for promotion
    - evaluation policies and procedures, and performance reviews
    - review of fringe benefits policies*(These are the responsibilities of the current Committee on Academic Personnel Policy.)*
  - hold an annual meeting to report on the state of academic librarianship at Cornell and have the option of calling other meetings as needed

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

If these recommendations are endorsed by the University Librarian, we suggest the following steps be taken for implementation:

- Meet with the Library Executive Group to solicit feedback
- Meet with the Academic Assembly Steering Committee to solicit feedback
- Introduce the Library Forum and Academic Assembly proposals to CUL staff and solicit feedback via a series of hearings, a survey, and/or other means in the spring semester (*Task Force on Inclusiveness*)
- Draft a revised charge for the Library Forum based on the feedback (*Task Force on Inclusiveness*)

- Charge the Academic Assembly Steering Committee with drafting revisions to the Academic Assembly bylaws and the committee structure
- Bring the proposed new bylaws and structure to the April meeting of the Academic Assembly for a vote (*Academic Assembly Steering Committee*)
- Hold elections for the Library Forum Steering Committee and the Academic Assembly Steering Committee before June 30, 2009
- The Library Forum and the restructured Academic Assembly open for business in July 2009

## **STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMING SUGGESTIONS**

In addition to these two major recommendations, the task force identified several strategies that we believe would improve the climate for inclusiveness throughout CUL. As previously stated, we tried to avoid recommending particular strategies already identified in the SAG report. We realize that this list is far from comprehensive and are certain that a Library Forum Committee could expand it without much difficulty.

The strategies are grouped into two categories: (1) provide opportunities to share information and make connections and (2) support career development. These strategies should be considered by the Library Forum Steering Committee as it identifies ways to fulfill its mission.

CUL staff are dedicated to fulfilling their specific job responsibilities, and many feel pressure on their time that hinders their participation in CUL-wide activities. At the same time, if we are serious in our belief that engaged staff add more value to the organization, we must find ways to encourage and reward the behavior of staff who participate in activities that connect them with others in CUL, who seek greater understanding of the library and its goals and who desire to improve their skills and to develop professionally and individually. When staff feel supported in this way, they are more likely to contribute more.

### ***1. Provide Opportunities to Share Information and Make Connections***

- a) Senior management should work with middle managers and supervisors to promote the value of greater staff engagement and acknowledge and reward their efforts in this regard. It is important for managers and supervisors to recognize the power of the messages they send staff about the value of participation.
- b) Hold meetings in units and departments across CUL, either in conjunction with or in addition to the traditional tours, to explain operations and share best practices. Include a segment for unit/department staff and guests to interact so they can make connections outside their own departments/units. Make a better effort to effectively market these sessions and urge supervisors to encourage their staff, especially new staff, to attend.

- c) Develop job- and library-related communities of interest and encourage self-managed action/learning groups. These may be facilitated by a voluntary talent/skills/interest database on the StaffWeb or perhaps on an external social networking site, allowing CUL staff to share their talents and strengths.
- d) Help each and every employee understand how he or she is an important part of the CUL community. We are a complicated system with distinct polices and practices based on the terms of our employment as academic or non-academic staff. It is important that all staff understand the different obligations and expectations associated with these terms of employment and how each adds value. This might enable us to avoid misunderstandings. What one employee perceives as a perk might be a condition of employment for another (e.g., professional travel for a librarian.)
- e) Enhance the new-employee orientation program.
  - i. Provide all new CUL staff during orientation with information about both the academic and non-academic human resources policies and practices in CUL.
  - ii. Assess new staff's experience with, and perceptions of, CUL after six months on the job by way of either a meeting with a representative from Library Human Resources or a follow-up questionnaire/survey to identify and address concerns of new staff early on.
- f) Increase awareness and visibility of social events for library staff.

## ***2. Support Career and Professional Development***

- a) Ensure that all CUL staff can explore learning and development opportunities. This might include shadowing other staff ("bring your colleague to work day)," workshops, etc. In particular, the library should incorporate technologies, e.g., teleconferencing, to connect CUL staff with professional and career development opportunities within and beyond Cornell.
- b) Support mentoring, both formal and informal, and expand the opportunity of mentoring to all CUL staff. We see this as benefiting all involved in the mentoring process.
- c) Provide all CUL staff with the opportunity to have a career development conversation with a mentor/guide/expert at least once each year. This is separate from the performance assessment dialog with their supervisors. It could be facilitated by Library Human Resources, perhaps with the assistance of the Library Forum's Career and Professional Development Committee.

Although we have tried to refrain from repeating recommendations made by SAG, we nevertheless want to emphasize our support for one of them. We believe it is crucial that CUL regularly schedule ClimateQUAL or some equivalent assessment to measure the extent to which CUL staff feel that the organization has achieved and is maintaining a climate of inclusiveness.

## **INITIAL ASSESSMENT MEASURES**

We have identified a few criteria by which to gauge the success of the Library Forum and the change in scope of the Academic Assembly. We recognize that it will take some time to make a lasting cultural change and that we should repeat assessments over a reasonably extended period. The criteria are

- Level of participation by both academic and non-academic staff in the new Library Forum. This could be measured by
  - attendance at meetings
  - number of members volunteering to serve on committees
  - number of votes cast for candidates for the Library Forum Steering Committee
  - degree of satisfaction with programs and activities of the Library Forum as measured by evaluations and employee surveys
- Level of participation in the Academic Assembly. This could be measured by
  - attendance at meetings
  - number of members volunteering to run for the Academic Assembly Steering Committee and to serve on other committees that might be formed
  - number of votes cast for candidates for the Academic Assembly Steering Committee
  - degree of satisfaction with programs and activities of the Academic Assembly as measured by evaluations and surveys
- Improvement in staff's perception of how rank and status affect their ability to participate in the work of the CUL community as measured by ClimateQUAL or other survey instruments

## **CONCLUSION**

There are numerous steps to take in preparing the way for an improved work environment, and the task force could make further contributions to the effort. At a minimum we would like to conduct a survey and hold conversational meetings with staff to gather feedback on our proposals. Beyond that, we could help draft a formal charge for the Library Forum based on this feedback. In conclusion, we feel that with good will and serious intention, CUL could indeed achieve the goals of SAG and the Task Force on Staff Inclusiveness. We stand ready to assist SAG or any other groups appointed to realize our hopes and intent.