UCI OIT Culture Transformation Initiative

Leading Change by Putting People and Culture First

2020 Larry L. Sautter Award Program Application Submission

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Summary

As higher education institutions evolve rapidly with continuously changing environments, the expectations for Information Technology organizations become increasingly critical. We must learn to balance and keep operations afloat while also forging strategic and innovative solutions. Oftentimes, IT organizations are so predominantly focused on projects to support the University, faculty, staff and students, that internal engagement takes a back seat. That is why our department took a critical look at its internal culture in order to thrive as an effective organization, by highlighting core values that encourage behavioral alignment to the mission of the institution as a whole.

Culture provides an informal control mechanism, a strong sense of identification with the organization, and a shared understanding among employees about priorities. By redefining the organization's core values, mission and vision, we have begun to embark on an initiative for the Office of Information Technology (OIT) at UCI to establish a common unified culture for all employees.

Historically, UCI's IT departments have been fragmented and embedded as individual smaller groups across various campus departments. Amidst the 2009 financial challenges, UCI consolidated IT departments into the Office of Information Technology to increase efficiency. For the past decade, OIT has comprised of many disparate pockets of coexisting cultures. This initiative became imperative in the 2019 OIT Senior Leadership Retreat where leaders revisited the mission and created the vision and potential core values draft. As a result, with input from management teams, OIT developed eight core values that exemplify the department's visionary aspirations. Partnering with Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP), OIT created a strategic roadmap for reframing its culture by emphasizing organizational excellence and employee engagement.

Everything about a workplace experience, from operating systems, policies, procedures, or environment, should reflect the same message. That is why culture initiatives require reinforcement – consistency and reliability of the message. Consequently, we created a workgroup consisting of staff from all divisions across OIT to guide this transformation. The workgroup also strives to develop and provide insights into practical tools and resources that enable all staff to live our cultural values (e.g. supporting messaging, experiences, and incentive structures). Additionally, the workgroup establishes metrics for supervisors at all levels to use in spearheading this change. Moreover, the workgroup is conscientiously growing an ecosystem of OIT ambassadors who spread our culture and bring diverse perspectives to cultivate and nurture this effort.

Our intranet site utilizes a highly interactive engagement platform by HypeInnovation, a dedicated collaboration space that can be used to inspire, create and connect on ideas and experiences about our culture transformation (a screenshot is attached below for reference). This platform also allows staff to share stories and express how they see OIT living its mission, vision, values or provide suggestions on how we can further

advance our culture.

To measure success, we randomly selected staff for a check-in through our bi-monthly Pulse Focus Group Survey. We also conducted a mid-year survey evaluation, which was used to determine the effectiveness of messaging, communication, and outreach strategies. These survey results show that culture remains a relevant discussion topic during staff meetings. In particular, 19.8% of staff answered that they have seen a positive cultural shift in their environment. Moving forward, we will complete the introduction of all of our core values, conduct an end of the year all staff survey, and continue adjusting our culture transformation approach to better fit the unprecedented COVID-19 challenges. This initiative has demonstrated that a strong culture can be the driving force behind the organization's health, success, and prosperity.

Outreach and Collaboration
Our Culture Initiative fosters a strong partnership with campus HR Business Partner (HRBP). OIT consists of 6 divisions, 55 teams, and over 400 staff members. Our department actively works with all employees to seek authentic, constructive and actionable feedback on the cultural transformation initiative.

Timeline

Summer 2019	- Identified cultural core values - Launched the organizational culture transformation initiative

Fall 2019	- Introduced definitions of values and culture FAQ to all employees
	- Created a communication and change management plan
	  including a detailed timeline for initiative rollout
	- Created an intranet engagement online channel for receiving
	  feedback and communicating about the culture change
	- Developed a toolkit for managers and supervisors
	- Formed a highly diverse Culture Workgroup with a clear charge

Spring 2020	- Impacted by COVID-19 crisis - Implemented remote work culture considerations
Summer 2020	- Extend communication and outreach - Launch Ideabox tool to invite continuous feedback - Boost manager toolkit - Develop Ambassador Program and Employee Recognition
Winter 2020	- Continuous refinement and implementation of best practices

Additional Resources
[About OIT Culture](#)

Screenshot of "Inspiration" Tab of HypeInnovation Collaboration Platform: