

New DSI Process for UUP Professionals
February 5, 2007

Introduction and Background

In October 2005, I convened a committee to study the current DSI process at SUNY Cortland and propose new and/or revised procedures to be used to award future contractual DSI awards. The committee was comprised of a diverse population of professionals and management staff which consisted of the following:

- Chandler, Mariangela – ASAP, UUP Professional
- Evans, Gary – Human Resources, M/C
- Franco, Ray – VP of Student Affairs, M/C and Chair
- Galutz, Dianne – Administrative Computing, VP for Professionals
- Pasquarello, Nanette - Judicial Affairs, UUP Professional
- Sitterly, Joan – Athletics, UUP Professional
- Slack, Tim – Physical Plant, M/C
- Verdow, George – Classroom Media Service, UUP Professional

Throughout the process, the committee was guided by the language articulated in the UUP Professional Services Unit Agreement, the Memorandum of Understanding Relating to Evaluation and Promotion of Professional Employees and the following philosophy regarding DSI:

DSI funding is designed to promote excellence in professional service by recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance in individuals who have performed at the highest level within their identified duties and have gone above and beyond those duties. It is understood that there is an institutional expectation that all employees will demonstrate excellence in the daily performance of their duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the above, a preliminary draft of the committee's recommendations was shared with all UUP professionals and the Cabinet. Feedback was received and some modifications and/or clarifications were made to the committee's report which are all contained in this final plan. However, the specific feedback and the committee's response is available as an addendum to this report.

Review of Current Process

The committee identified a number of issues that are viewed as problematic with the procedures currently used on the SUNY Cortland campus. These issues were identified through personal opinions of the committee members, comments received from other professionals by members of the committee, and the survey results from the *Spring 2004 Re-evaluation of the Peer Review Process*. Those that were identified included:

- the timing of the process
- the application process itself (both the self nomination aspect of it and the open ended nature of the “application”)
- the DSI committee process and the view by some that the process is arbitrary and does not accurately recognize individuals deserving of DSI awards
- the administrative level at which funds are distributed
- the very elements that should be considered for DSI

The committee then reviewed the procedures in place at a large number of public and private colleges across the country to determine if there were any practices that were consistently applied. The one consistent practice, regardless of institution, was the direct involvement of employees’ supervisors in the awarding of DSI. Not a single institution researched by the committee used a committee structure to award DSI. In nearly all cases, the division or major unit heads (usually the vice presidents) made DSI decisions. The rationale for this practice seemed to be based on the difficulty of comparing individuals’ quality of performance across all divisions of an institution, whereas within a single division, such comparisons could be more easily and consistently determined by individual vice presidents, and in some cases, the associate vice presidents.

Criteria Definition

The recommendation of the committee is that the performance of duties be weighted to account for the relative importance that the college places on these responsibilities. The areas used are derived from the current Professional Evaluation process and consist of the following: Effectiveness in Performance, Professional Ability, and Effectiveness in University Service and Continuing Growth. Examples of activities and/or performance achievements that would demonstrate exceptional service within these areas include, but are not limited to the following.

‘Effectiveness in Performance’

- Developed and implemented new initiatives or services that had a significant and positive impact on the department, division, or College (e.g., research and implementation of new technology such as Banner, On-Base document imaging, etc., research, development, and implementation of new programs/presentations).
- Coordinated and implemented new initiatives or services required of the College that had a significant and positive impact on the department, division, or college. (e.g. HIPAA compliance implementation, new SUNY mandates, new Federal or State mandates)
- Made self available “above the call of duty” without additional compensation while maintaining an exceptional level of performance of daily duties and responsibilities. (e.g. making oneself available to assist with a student crisis outside of normal course of responsibilities, routinely available outside of normal obligation to assist with college programs, events, emergencies, etc., makes a significant and recognizable contribution to a student in need or in crisis.)
- Based on demonstrated knowledge and effectiveness within his/her job, assumed significant responsibilities in activities that advanced the cause(s) of SUNY Cortland that fell outside of the individual’s area of responsibilities without additional compensation. (e.g. orientation, specific campus groups or committees, delivered training or

informational sessions, assisted with a departmental assessments or audit and provided guidance.)

- Responsible for and coordinated an audit/accreditation/etc. from an outside entity (i.e. SUNY, Federal, State, or Local entity) of areas of responsibility which received high accolades for compliance.
- Significant accomplishment within the performance of duties (e.g. winning a championship, etc.).

‘Professional Ability’

- Made significant contributions to successfully address a crisis or to mitigate a potential crisis (e.g. resolved computer/network problems or failures, resolved shortages of housing, classroom space, etc., through creative and innovative approaches, led initiative to conserve and save energy which resulted in significant savings or resolution.)
- Effectively coordinate and communicate cross departmental or divisional goals or objectives which result in a collaborative accomplishment. (e.g., admissions and athletics coordinating recruiting efforts resulting in positive impact for both units, student affairs and academic affairs collaborating on an effort to increase faculty/student relationships outside of the classroom).

‘Effectiveness in University Service and Continuing Growth’

- Active participation in college and college related student or community activities/groups which have a positive impact while maintaining an exceptional level of performance with daily duties and responsibilities. (e.g., advising a group, search committees, boards, Faculty Senate, etc.)
- Pursued and achieved degrees, certifications, licenses, etc through continuing education or other formal training that enhances the qualifications of the individual in his or her current position.
- Willingly assumed additional responsibilities on a temporary basis without additional compensation while maintaining an exceptional level of performance with daily duties and responsibilities.
- Received recognition by professional, state, and/or national organizations for activities and services to the organization, profession, and/or other group.

The above list is not all inclusive and is not meant to definitively define performances which could receive DSI. It is meant to give the campus community examples of the level of performance that would indicate an employee’s consideration for DSI.

Weighting of Criteria

In addition to reviewing all professional employees consistently against the above defined criteria, the committee recommends weighting each criterion consistent with the mission of the College and the individual’s job. The most important criterion and primary purpose for any professional is “effectiveness in performance” which should receive the greatest weight. The remaining two areas will vary greatly per individual based on their daily responsibilities. Accordingly, these areas will be rated much less than the first but not necessarily consistent for all professionals. The committee suggests the following weighting guidelines per area which

would be ultimately agreed upon by the supervisor and professional employee at the time his/her performance program is developed annually:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| >= 60% | Effectiveness in Performance: |
| <20% | Professional Ability: |
| <u><20%</u> | Effectiveness in University Service and Continuing Growth |
| 100% | |

Importantly, the weighting of the criteria suggests that it would be highly unlikely that an employee would receive DSI unless they were rated very strongly in the “effectiveness in performance.” With a weighting of at least three times the other two categories, it is believed that the completion of a strong performance of ones’ position responsibilities is essential for DSI, however, it is also recognized that in order to distinguish between outstanding employees, to further the goals of the institution, and to complete the required work of the college, the other criteria are important as well. It is the development of the correct balance of effort which is the true challenge for every professional and for the consideration of DSI.

Performance Evaluation and DSI

As implied above, the committee believes that the employee performance program and corresponding performance evaluation should be tied to the DSI process as much as possible. That is, when one is evaluated, the strength of the evaluation should, in part, determine the employee’s eligibility for DSI. It is recognized that due to timing constraints of evaluations, there might be a significant gap in time from the period of the last completed evaluation to the awarding of DSI.

To ‘close’ this gap, all UUP professional employees will be required to prepare an individual annual report (IAR) of their specific accomplishments and contributions to their department, division, and to the College which will be utilized in two ways:

1. To be submitted to the department head for use in completing the required departmental annual report; and
2. to be used in conjunction with their most recent completed evaluation and performance program as submission for DSI.

The IAR’s due date will coincide with the due dates for the departmental annual report submissions. The supervisor will then be required to submit the employee’s most recent evaluation, performance program and IAR with an addendum/clarification from the supervisor that will serve as an overall recommendation from the supervisor for DSI of his/her employee. Once an employee obtains permanent appointment and his/her evaluation cycle moves to July 1 through June 30, the addendum/clarification will no longer be required because the evaluation dates will coincide with the professional DSI award dates which are typically July 1.

The relationship of the DSI to an employee’s evaluation, the requirement of an IAR, and a supervisory addendum/recommendation represent a significant change in philosophy and practice at the College. The committee believes this change could best be approached through

conducting mandatory performance program and evaluation training which would focus on tying the evaluation process to the DSI award process, developing guidelines to be used when writing an IAR, and developing a form to be used by the supervisor when preparing his/her overall recommendation. It is expected that human resources and UUP will work collaboratively on this training effort.

The above practice will serve as a tool to unify the annual performance program/ evaluation process and the annual report process to the overall mission of the College. The practice will also serve as a means to allow for the most accurate representation of one's performance and achievements throughout the year as rated by the employee through the IAR as well as employee comments reflected on the evaluation and by the supervisor through the evaluation and final recommendation.

Limited Awards

The committee generally favors the idea of fewer but larger awards. By definition, DSI should be awarded to those who exceed normal position expectations and thus, the conclusion that it should be discriminatory in nature. When looking at performance levels of an employee group (all professionals), these performance levels typically represent the normal bell curve and as such, should result in identifying a smaller group of professionals who consistently exceed and go above and beyond their normal responsibilities. The committee initially recommended fewer and larger awards with somewhere between a minimum of 20% and a maximum of 35% of the professional staff receiving awards. However, this recommendation was not acceptable based on responses from campus constituents and the Cabinet. The committee then recommended "soft" limits on the number of recipients. I have agreed to do away with limits altogether and individual vice presidents will be able to determine the number of awards granted for their division.

Flow of the Process

As stated above, the committee recommends that the employee evaluation be directly tied to this process and that the supervisor's evaluation be heavily used to determine DSI eligibility. In an effort to ensure consistency, the committee also feels that the vice presidents should ultimately determine DSI for the employees within their divisions. The following rules have been developed by the committee:

1. The total amount of monies available per division will be based on the percentage of employees in that division as it relates to total professional staff headcount across all divisions and specifically not based on 1% of salary by division.
2. Awards for part-time employees will be prorated based on their FTE percentage.
3. Position distinction will not be required. In other words, all professionals will be awarded from the same divisional DSI pool.
4. Supervisors will forward all evaluations along with a DSI rating to their respective vice president.
5. Individual vice presidents will be able to determine the number of awards granted for their division. Vice presidents will involve members of the management staff (associate

vice presidents, etc.) in their divisions in any way they determine appropriate, given the organizational structure of the respective divisions.

6. Decisions of the vice presidents are final and not subject to any appeal.

Implementation

It is expected that this new process could be implemented with the next round of DSI available after this years 1% which is to be awarded in July 2007 for professionals. The timeframe of the next round is currently undetermined based on the expiration of the UUP Agreement on June 30, 2007 and no information available on when the next contract might be ratified.

In an effort to prepare for this next round of DSI, it is expected that commencing this summer (July 1) that new performance programs be developed consistent with the process outlined above and starting in May/June 2008, IAR's would be expected. In the meantime, training will be developed and rolled out in an effort to be ready to implement this process effective July 2008 if needed based on a new contract.

Addendum

Campus Community Feedback

President Bitterbaum released the progress report to the campus on April 3, 2006 asking the community for feedback on the proposed changes to the process which would distribute DSI for professionals at SUNY Cortland. The deadline for feedback was April 17, 2006 and the committee met on April 24 to review all feedback received. The following are issues which were raised by professionals on campus.

1. Some positions on campus are so intense that professionals cannot possibly be involved outside of the normal performance of their duties. Thus, the two categories of university service (20%) and continuing growth (20%) are of concern for these professionals.
2. Supervisor rating inconsistency is a concern for staff. That is, it is believed that some supervisors may be more critical than others, thus putting their staff at a disadvantage. A related issue is that the nature of the professional (and in some cases the personal) relationship between supervisor and professional. The concern here is whether a supervisor would be objective if the personal/professional relationship was not positive.
3. The lack of an appeal process concerned several staff.
4. The limited number of awards and the apparently stringent limits was a concern for staff.
5. A question was raised regarding how 10- and 11-month, full-time professionals would be treated. In other words, would these professionals be prorated or would they be eligible for the full DSI award?
6. A concern was raised about the variation in visibility of positions on the campus and the possibility that the more visible positions and those that are higher in the organizational chart (closer to the vice presidents) might be favored by the proposed process.

Several staff expressed support for the requirement of an annual report, agreed that self nominations should be eliminated, and in general, expressed satisfaction with the proposed changes. Some staff indicated an interest in doing away with DSI and simply distributing the 1% as an additional across the board increase.

Committee Response to Campus Feedback

A few comments were discussed by the committee with the conclusion being drawn that either the person providing the feedback didn't understand certain aspects of the proposal or that the proposal wasn't perfectly clear on all issues. These include concerns that the report indicated that the current process does not involve supervisors (not stated in the report). The report did suggest that other campuses involved supervisors much more directly than SUNY Cortland and

did not use a committee structure (as we have). Another concern expressed was that the proposed process would favor better writers. The committee feels that the current process of self nomination favors better writers and that the proposed process will result in a rating score completed by a supervisor (not a self nomination) and the opportunity for the VP's to use the performance evaluation to determine who is most highly deserving. It is true that poorly completed evaluations could impact the way a VP might rate an employee.

The committees' reaction to the issues raised above is as follows.

1. Some positions on campus are so intense that professionals cannot possibly be involved outside of the normal performance of their duties. Thus, the category of Effectiveness in University Service and Continuing Growth, 20%. is of concern for these professionals.

This is an area of concern that the committee had discussed. Given the concerns expressed across the campus, the committee suggests that each employee would be able to determine with their supervisor the weighting of the three areas. The president could state what he believes is the typical or ideal breakdown of the areas of professional responsibility, but each employee could have a specified weighting for a given period of time. Given job responsibilities on campus and the fact that in some years a major project might be all encompassing for an employee, this approach to determining a fair weighting of the categories makes sense.

2. Supervisor rating inconsistency is a concern for staff. That is, it is believed that some supervisors may be more critical than others, thus putting their staff at a disadvantage. A related issue is that the nature of the professional (and in some cases the personal) relationship between supervisor and professional. The concern here is whether a supervisor would be objective if the personal/professional relationship was not positive.

The committee felt that supervisory training by Human Resources would be essential to address this concern. Additionally, the vice presidents will need to look beyond the numerical ratings and analyze each professional's performance evaluation to determine who is most deserving in their division. The nature of the relationship between supervisors and employees must also be addressed both by Human Resources (reminding supervisors of the critical importance of fair and consistent treatment of employees) and by the vice presidents.

3. The lack of an appeal process concerned several staff.

While the committee does not feel that an appeal process is necessary, the committee acknowledges that any professional can discuss matters related to this process or any other personnel matter with his/her supervisor, the vice president of his/her division, or the president.

4. The limited number of awards and the apparently stringent limits was a concern for staff.

The committee agrees that stringent percentage limits should be eliminated. Individual vice presidents would be able to vary from those limits but would need to review and justify such variations with the president.

5. A question was raised regarding how 10- and 11-month, full-time professionals would be treated. In other words, would these professionals be prorated or would they be eligible for the full DSI award?

The committee believes that full-time professionals, regardless of duration of appointment, should be eligible for full DSI consideration.

6. A concern was raised about the variation in visibility of positions on the campus and the possibility that the more visible positions and those that are higher in the organizational chart (closer to the vice presidents) might be favored by the proposed process.

The vice presidents must focus on the degree to which each member of their staff completed the duties assigned and the degree to which they contributed to the university (related to university service) and professional development and must guard against being influenced by rank or visibility. Given the concerns expressed in number one above, the committee is once again agreeing that each individual professional agree, at the beginning of each evaluation cycle, with their supervisor about the nature of their assignments for that given cycle and the weighting of effectiveness of performance, university service, and professional ability.