

Inside OUTREACH

From the desk of Craig Weidemann, Vice President for Outreach

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“Every organization—not just businesses—needs one core competence: innovation.”

Peter F. Drucker

Colleagues,

As promised, I am expanding on some of the Outreach structural changes that I announced in July's issue of Inside Outreach in this and future issues. One of the changes I mentioned included several new and exciting initiatives. These initiatives coincided with the start of our 2007-08 fiscal year and were created to focus on specific opportunities for Outreach. One such area is innovation.

Innovation springs from a disciplined approach to identifying and then delivering new products or services that fill a societal need.

Today, the U.S. needs to cultivate its innovative structures to remain a global leader. One of those structures is higher education. At no other time in history has higher education been so uniquely positioned to drive U.S. competitiveness at the local, state, and national levels. Through our partnerships and work with the National Association of State Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Penn State is a national leader in addressing the needs of Pennsylvania.

As an organization, our work is created and built through innovative processes and programs, and we have been successful as a result of this approach. However, there are often built-in biases that work against risk-taking, creative initiative, and fresh perspectives on problem solving, all of which tend to restrict innovation to pockets within the organization.

By creating an innovation initiative, we will advance our approach to innovation by focusing our collective energies on developing innovation as a core competency across management and staff, and as a core value within our organizational processes, programs, and products.

By expanding beyond processes and programs, this year we will begin an organization-wide focus on creativity and innovation. The Outreach Innovation Initiative team will be led by Ted Krichels, general manager for Penn State Public Broadcasting (PSPB) and associate vice president for Public Engagement. Ted, along with a small group of people, will help spark this effort by involving staff across the organization in overcoming barriers and developing structures that support risk-taking, creative initiative, and fresh perspectives on problem solving.



Some of their work will involve collaborating with Outreach Professional Development to enrich the Open Minds series. Bonnie Crammond, director of the University of Georgia's Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development, will be the guest speaker at the Open Minds session in October. To learn more about Bonnie and the Center, visit www.coe.uga.edu/torrance/index.html.

Below are the Outreach Innovation Initiative team members. Feel free to contact them and share your thoughts on advancing innovation.

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As an organization, we have room for improvement in ensuring information is shared with every staff member in a timely manner, and that all members understand how their unit or job will be affected. The Internal Communications Team is working with Executive Team, the Associate Vice Presidents, and me to strategically coordinate the timing and appropriate methods of communication such as face-to-face, electronic, and written.

A vital aspect of the team's work is derived from anonymous staff input and feedback through an electronic panel. The panel currently has less than 150 members from our 1,500-strong organization. Our work to improve internal communications will only be as good as the recommendations and feedback we receive from you. If you wish to share your insight and provide feedback on internal communications, please join the panel at <http://omr.outreach.psu.edu/surveys/panel.htm>.

Craig and Ted

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