

# Inside OUTREACH

From the desk of Craig Weidemann, Vice President for Outreach

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**“Organizations learn only through individuals who learn.  
Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning.  
But without it no organizational learning occurs.”**

*Peter Senge*

*Learning* is one of ten Outreach core values. Peter Senge, strategist and author of The Fifth Discipline, popularized the concept of ‘the learning organization’ in the 1990s. His vision of the learning organization is of a group of people who continually enhance their capabilities to create. The concept of the learning organization holds true today. In the push for organizations to become more innovative than ever before, continual learning is still an important element.



**Tom Wujec, Lori Johnson-Vegas  
at Open Minds**

Professional development can be achieved in a number of ways and is not limited to external conferences, webinars, online offerings, readings, or organizational in-house offerings. As a champion for lifelong learning, I consider ongoing professional development a necessity for every employee. As such, Outreach has an obligation to ensure diverse methods and opportunities are in place so employees can invest in professional development that will enrich their professional lives.

It is my goal to provide every employee with multiple opportunities to further their interests and goals. Each Outreach unit allocates training dollars to invest in their employees’ professional interests and development as approved by supervisors. Recognizing that there are certain skills sets employees should have to perform at expected levels, the Outreach Professional Development (OPD) Unit was created two years ago. OPD is one method through which all Outreach employees are afforded the opportunity to obtain the training needed via in-house training, lectures, and conferences.



**Cyndi Martin**



**Amy Gregor**

Led by Lori Johnson-Vegas, Outreach Professional Development administered over 50 programs to 2,000 Outreach employees from April 2006 to March 2007. Johnson-Vegas and her small team are the little-known force behind many Outreach-wide professional development programs and activities. The most well recognized programs include Outreach Learning Lunches, the annual all-employee Outreach Day of Connection, and the Innovation Series/Open Minds forums.

Charged with providing a variety of professional development opportunities for Outreach employees, the OPD unit consists of Johnson-Vegas, Amy Gregor, training coordinator, and Cyndi Martin, staff assistant. The team fosters continuous lifelong learning by providing programs that are informative, knowledgeable, creative, innovative, and relevant. The Outreach Professional Development Unit wants to take training to the next level by providing programs in a professional, fun, and enjoyable environment where employees feel comfortable and fully engaged.

One example, as I previously mentioned, is the Learning Lunches. Offered to all Outreach employees on the second Wednesday of every month, the lunches cover a variety of topics



including Marketing, the SRDP, Good to Great, Adult Learning, and Workplace Ethics. Learning Lunch speakers and facilitators have included Gary Miller, associate vice president for Outreach; Maureen Dodson, instructor for Outreach Management Development Programs and Services; and Beth McLaughlin from the Penn State Affirmative Action Office. Conducted on a first-come, first-serve basis, the Learning Lunches groups enjoy their lunches while interacting with the guest speaker.

One of the newest Outreach Professional Development programs is the Innovation Series/Open Minds forums. This series is designed to help employees understand and cultivate innovation in their job, their workplace, in the organization and the University, as well as around the country and the world. Past speakers have included Cole Campese, director of Penn State's Education Technology Services; Bob Beaury, Chair of Penn State Public Broadcasting's Board of Representatives; and Tom Wujec, a Fellow and Principal Consultant at Autodesk, the Oscar winning industry leader in 3D computer animation technology. The Open Minds Forums are offered at various times throughout the year. Next year, the forums will be offered on a regularly scheduled basis.

#### Programs:

- Extension In-Service
- Leadership Development
- New Outreach Employee Orientation
- Internships
- Job Shadowing

Another program, the Leadership Assessment Center, is offered twice a year to Outreach managers and supervisors and those who aspire to these positions. The Center features individual and group simulations that involve challenges common to managers. The program concludes with feedback regarding behaviors and competencies essential for leadership and management success. In addition, participants receive personal action strategies to help them focus on developing their leadership and management skills.

To aid in the creation, development, and delivery of these programs, an Outreach Professional Development Program Team (OPDPT) was created. Assembled with representatives from each area of Outreach, the Program Team is charged with identifying organizational and departmental professional development needs; assisting with program coordination and development; hosting programs; and finding creative and innovative ways to present programs around Pennsylvania. Appointed members include: Bill Curley from Statewide Continuing Education; Angela Rogers from Marketing; Sandy Clemmer from Client Development; Jeff Smith from Finance; Paula Hamaty from Student Services; Stephanie Tyworth from World Campus; John Park from Continuing and Professional Education; and Brenda Bernatowicz, Dennis Calvin, and Janice Alberico from Cooperative Extension. A representative from Penn State Public Broadcasting is yet to be determined.

Outreach employees have varying levels of professional development needs and wants. I encourage you to consider what types of programs can best meet these needs. Please forward suggestions for programs to Johnson-Vegas. Her contact information, as well as more information on Outreach Professional Development programs are available on the web at <http://esd.cas.psu.edu/>. Click on 'About Us' for phone and email contact information and 'Calendar' to view upcoming programs.

Craig

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