



# Procedure 269.1A Employee Affinity Groups

## *Policy 269 - Employee Affinity Groups*

### **1. Definition and Purpose:**

Employee Affinity Groups (EAG) are voluntary associations of Lower Columbia College employees who gather together around a common interest and are formed pursuant to the college's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Strategic Plan. EAGs play a vital role in developing and improving employee morale and the campus climate. EAGs support the shared mission, vision and values of the College and break down barriers of rank and work group around shared interests by encouraging collaboration and understanding.

LCC is supportive of a system of Employee Affinity Groups that contribute to the following:

- Foster employee development
- Contribute to the College's commitment to advancing social equity, while challenging systems of power, privilege and inequities
- Strengthen networking and cohesiveness across the College, and promote career and professional development
- Provide important feedback to management and assist with efforts to attract and retain highly qualified candidates for employment at LCC

### **2. Formation and Organization**

EAGs are formed and led by employees. Employee Affinity Groups must:

- A. Be formed around a shared characteristic or common interest that can positively affect professional development, retention, and the College's strategic plan. Examples include but are not limited to: national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, being a working parent, veteran status, or caring for aging family members while working.
- B. Be open to all College non-student employees and non-student volunteers. As required by state and federal law and College policy, Employee Affinity Groups may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, veteran's status, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.
- C. Adhere to all College policies and procedures.  
<https://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/>
- D. Be composed of only College non-student employees and non-student volunteers. Guest speakers may be invited to EAG meetings.
- E. As required by the Ethics in Public Service Act [RCW 42.52](#), EAGs may not use College resources to support or oppose any ballot proposition or candidate for public office. Additionally, EAGs may not be formed to promote or benefit any private company or organization.
- F. Employees interested in forming an EAG should complete an EAG application. The application is then submitted to the Diversity and Equity Committee to provide advocacy, support, and guidance for EAGs. Employees must articulate how the group's formation relates to professional development, retention, and the College's DEI strategic plan. Once reviewed and recommended by the DEI committee, the application is submitted to the Executive Leadership Team for final approval.
- G. EAG Leads will submit an annual report to the DEI committee that includes the name of the lead contact for the following year, number of meetings held, number of members and highlights from the previous year related to the strategic plan, retention, professional development, and/or the group's goals.
- H. Members of an EAG are responsible for:
  - Forming, organizing, managing, and leading the group
  - Setting meetings and activities including frequency, location, purpose and content

- Developing, recruiting, and maintaining a contact list for current members. The College cannot provide lists and/or names of employees from a particular race or ethnicity.
- Completing and submitting a brief end-of-year report (which may include number of meetings, activities, how funding was spent, accomplishments and goals, etc.)

### **3. College Resources for Employee Affinity Groups Guidance**

EAGs are encouraged to communicate suggestions for improvements in College practices to the Diversity and Equity Committee or by contacting the Executive Leadership Team. EAG members may also be asked by the College to help reach particular audiences or assist in expanding the applicant pool during employee recruitment activities.

Employee Affinity Group meetings and ongoing efforts positively affect the work environment and contribute to College core values and strategic planning goals, including helping to recruit and retain a high quality, highly skilled workforce (providing employees with the skills, knowledge and tools they need to be successful, and promoting social equity, inclusiveness and cultural competence across the organization.)

The College believes that EAG meetings and mentoring and training activities enhance employee professional development, contribute to one's professional role in the College, and are reasonably related to a number of other official College purposes. In accordance with State Ethics rules, Employee Affinity Groups are authorized to make use of the following state resources for the listed purposes:

#### **A. Physical Space**

- i. College shared space, including conference and break rooms may be used for group meetings on a space available basis. Because shared space is limited and priority for use must be given to the performance of College business, it is possible that a scheduled College business meeting may take priority over EAGs meeting as necessary for College business.
- ii. Other college space (generally office space or cubicles) may be used when providing mentoring.

## B. Employee Time

- i. While meetings may occur during lunch breaks and after hours, some meetings, informal mentoring and training may occur during regular working hours. Employees are asked to work with their supervisor for approval for any time during regular working hours for EAG related activities. Time allotted for participation can be adjusted per supervisor's approval on a case-by-case basis.
- ii. Employees preparing meeting agendas and/or training materials may use work time to prepare.
- iii. Participation in EAG activities may not interfere with the performance of the employee's regularly assigned duties.
- iv. While supervisor approval is not required to join an EAG, employees shall make their supervisors aware of their participation in an EAG. Where an employee's performance is affected by participation, employees and supervisors should consult with Human Resources and may limit use of work time on EAG activities in order to improve performance.

## C. Computer, Electronic Mail, and Telephones

- i. College computers may be used to prepare meeting agendas and/or training materials.
- ii. College computers, AV equipment, email and telephones may be used to hold meetings by teleconference, convey information about upcoming meetings, communicate with one another between meetings, communicate with speakers or potential speakers, and provide advice and mentoring to others.
- iii. A designated LCC webpage may be used to make the application process accessible and transparent, promote the EAGs to prospective and current staff and faculty, and facilitate the application process.

## Procedure History

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- Reviewed by Governance Council: March 1, 2023
- Reviewed by UMCC: March 21, 2023

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