

**ITHACA COLLEGE**  
**QUALITY OF WORK LIFE INITIATIVE FOR STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION**  
Final Report  
June 2005

In spring 2005 at the request of the President's Council, Suzanne Forsyth Associates conducted a Quality of Work Life (QWL) study at Ithaca College. The purpose of the study was to measure institutional progress in QWL areas with a focus on staff and administration issues as outlined in the College's Institutional Plan. To gain an understanding of employee perceptions about QWL, the consultants engaged a wide cross-section of the staff and administration in a number of forums including a day-long meeting with Leadership graduates (80), one-on-one interview sessions (40), focus groups (80), and feedback over the Internet. In total, approximately 200 employees participated in this initiative.

The study findings show that most employees are very satisfied with their employment and benefits at Ithaca College, indicating great appreciation for their colleagues as well as opportunities to participate in institutional activities outside of their immediate responsibilities. Such activities range from cultural and entertainment events to various committees to the inclusive institutional planning process.

While most employees enjoy the strong culture of community, as in any institution, there are work life issues that cause frustration and unhappiness. Some of the areas identified and detailed in this study are: management inconsistencies in matters of policy, difficult, sometimes abusive supervisors, the need for a more customer-focused orientation and advocacy in Human Resources, issues around change management, compensation, communication and affirmative action.

Interviewees reported management inconsistencies across the campus, which are visibly evident and disheartening to employees. Because the College has not developed standards of performance for supervisors, substandard behaviors often go unchecked. Most study participants voiced the need for mandatory supervisory management development programs and management standards.

Study respondents also indicated the need for a more customer-focused Human Resources department with an emphasis on employee advocacy and employee development. As processes become more automated or streamlined it is important that the personal interaction be maintained.

Another important topic to highlight is change management and its impact on workloads. Interviewees reported that many of the individuals involved in change decision-making are not part of change implementation and therefore have no comprehensive understanding of what is involved to achieve success. That major

disconnect often has a serious impact on workload distribution and some employees perceive an uneven burden.

Understandably, like all large organizations, there are issues of perception related to compensation. A number of interviewed employees at all levels expressed the belief that compensation is not justly distributed. They believe there are inconsistencies among supervisors in the administration of compensation and that some employees are receiving disproportionate increases for no apparent reason. In addition, special mention of concerns that some salaried employees receive higher salary increases than hourly employees was also noted. Some employees also perceive that while salaries of current employees are not adjusted to reflect changes in the markets, newly hired employees are believed to receive higher salaries for comparable work, thus causing widespread compression.

Many employees remarked that campus-wide communication is effectively handled, as with the Institutional Plan, but there is often a breakdown at the department level. A number of the study respondents reported that some leaders pass along important information to their staffs and others do not, so employees are not all working with the same level of information.

The last issue of note is confusion around diversity initiatives. Interviewed employees spoke about a lack of clarity about Ithaca College's objectives and concern over the implementation of affirmative action goals and objectives. Some employees feel that diversity is defined solely as the consideration of African Americans and is not broad enough. Some white employees feel marginalized and less valued than African American employees, especially some white males who were interviewed.

Based on the feedback from Ithaca College employees, Suzanne Forsyth Associates proposes the following recommendations for the College in an effort to alleviate some of the aforementioned concerns. Following the recommendation, the action strategy is noted.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Given the voiced demand for a supervisory development program, the College should develop a comprehensive supervisory professional development program. In addition, further investment should be made in the LeaderShip program by strengthening it and making it more strategic in direction. Graduates from this program are to be considered valuable institutional resources that are called upon during campus-wide initiatives. A reconstituted professional development advisory committee would help provide direction to these programs.

**NEXT STEPS:** *The Office of Human Resources will be charged with the development of a supervisory training program and strategies to enhance the*

*LeaderShip program and involve LeaderShip graduates, enlisting the counsel of the Staff Leadership Advisory Committee (to be re-convened).*

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The College should undertake an initiative to redesign and reengineer the hiring process with the goals of reducing the amount of time to make a hire and honoring institutional commitments to affirmative action by working with departments on recruiting, selection and appointments.

**NEXT STEPS:** *A task force will be convened and charged this fall to review the hiring process and make recommendations for appropriate changes.*

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The consultants recommend a review and revision of the College's compensation structure with the objective of creating a system that provides management and employees with greater flexibility to recognize varying credential requirements and market circumstances. This review should include an assessment of whether the current procedures governing the annual increment process need any modifications. The consultants also recommend that a workload analysis be conducted to identify where there may be uneven distributions of tasks and responsibilities.

**NEXT STEPS:** *The Office of Human Resources has been asked to identify external professionals that have expertise in this area that can be considered to assist the College in addressing these areas of concern.*

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The Human Resources staff should be asked to review current salaries and wages and identify cases of compression and the cost to the College of taking corrective action.

**NEXT STEPS:** *Cindy Reckdenwald, director of compensation and organizational design, has been charged to conduct this analysis and to provide the Budget Committee with an estimate of costs to be considered in developing the fiscal 2006-7 operating budget.*

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The Human Resource department should be charged with defining a mission, vision and operations plan that emphasizes a customer service model, seeking opportunities for enhancing employee relations and development.

**NEXT STEPS:** *The Office of Human Resources will be charged as noted within this recommendation.*

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The Offices of Human Resources department and Affirmative Action should develop a diversity educational program so that

employees understand the differences between affirmative action and diversity and the relationship of both to the College's mission and Institutional Plan.

**NEXT STEPS:** *President Williams will convene a small group from the Offices of Human Resources and Affirmative Action to discuss the recommendation and identify strategies for developing an effective program(s).*

As I noted at the All-College staff meeting, the aforementioned recommendations within this report have been reviewed and considered by the President's Council this summer. Each recommendation has been assigned to one or more members of the Council for full analysis, the development of implementation strategy, and coordination and oversight. Additional information will be made available during the fall semester and another update will be provided at the next All-College Staff meeting.