

ADAM HOWELL: Welcome, everybody to all of our staff joining us today. My name is Adam Howell. I'm chair of the Employee Assembly.

I want to thank you all for joining us today. And our latest topical forum, as you know for those of you who have who have been with us in the past, we are doing throughout the throughout the summer, the rest of July and all of August, a series of topical forums on issues of interest, the staff as well as our regular open forums that are a little bit longer, that are an hour long actually. We would love it for as many staff as possible to join us at these topical forums.

I'm going to ask the office of the assemblies to post the link one more time in the chat. And that'll be the link to the schedule for the rest of the summer. And we hope you can join us, because our entire goal here is to connect staff with the senior leadership on a variety of issues that are of interest to everybody.

Today's topic is professional growth. As we all know, the staff experience at Cornell, it's integral to have professional growth and development. And like everything else, we've seen changes and disruptions and different things happening with this in terms of COVID-19 outbreak, but hopefully also some opportunities for different engagements on the professional development growth fronts. We have our expert panelists with us, as always.

So without any further delay, I'm going to kick it over to Kathy Burkgren, who's the associate vice president for organizational development and effectiveness. Kathy, thank you so much for joining us. And I'll leave it to you to introduce yourself and say a few words. Thanks again.

KATHY BURKGREN: Thank you, Adam, and thanks to the EA for hosting these sessions. Our experience living and working through a pandemic is definitely unprecedented. And as we experience it, professional development is also critical, but this is on the agenda for the Employee Assembly speaks to its importance and the leadership valuing its importance.

For those of you who aren't aware, organizational development and effectiveness are ODE, as we shorten our name, is responsible for working with leaders, teams, groups, individuals on strategic planning, team building, coaching, lean process, improvement, leadership management, development, development of administration, and currently our offerings are online. We're offering retreats, coaching, consultations, and training. And we foresee it being that way into the future, no plans for when we will be back in rooms and such. And I think we will always have an online component.

We were working that way anyway. And this just helped us speed that up a little, bit just as it did for all of you. So that said, we're engaged with many of you in all kinds of ways, even though we're online.

And we enjoy working with you and the work that we do with you, whether it's an individual, a team, or an organization, or a group. And so I know I'm thrilled to be here today. And now I'd like to introduce Jim Sheridan, the senior management consultant for ODE.

JIM SHERIDAN: Thanks, Kathy. I'm really glad to be here everyone. Thanks for inviting us. This is a great topic.

And with so much change going on in the university and in the world, development is not immune from that. And interestingly, I think when change comes, it's a great time to develop. It's a great time to start doing things differently, gaining new skills, sharpening old skills, getting new perspectives.

So that's why I'm really excited about this topic today. I will say Kathy mentioned we were doing some things online already. We were moving in that direction.

We had a few things we had done. We had great progress so some of those things, but I know she might not want to say this, but I will. Some of us like myself or fighting that tooth and nail.

And for me a great result of working in this new environment is that I've increased my skills greatly and around designing for online training, conducting online training, and it really feels like I've-- an area I was resisting and not saying yes to came up as a skill that I've been able to develop and have fun with. And so I would encourage everyone during these times when there's so much changes is to figure out what can I do differently, how can I bring my expertise of what I used to do to doing the new way of things very effectively? So great topics. So thanks for having us here.

ADAM HOWELL: Great. We'll thank you both so much for being here. Your participation and in helping us all stay connected together during this interesting time as it is truly appreciated by us and all the staff.

I just wanted to mention one thing, and I forgot when we started off. Just like all the topical forums, we're going to be taking a mixture of pre-selected questions submitted by staff and live Q&A. So if you are joining us, viewing us live, you can submit questions via the Q&A box. And if there's time at the end, we'll try to get some of those asked as well.

So with that, I'm going to now turn it over to the executive vice chair of the Employee Assembly, Hei Hei Depew. Hei Hei, thanks again for curating all this for us. And I'll give it to you to kick us off.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you, Adam. So we've received several questions from the Qualtrics that was attached to the EA email. And so some of these individuals will be available to read their questions here.

We've received several questions. And the first one I'm going to read, it was submitted anonymously. And that question is in regards to how are you thinking about your own growth and development. And the question post anonymously was, I'm wondering how I can still grow

and be given new responsibilities while we are under a hiring freeze? How can I take the next step in my career when I cannot be given a promotion?

KATHY BURKGREN: I think that's an excellent question. And I'll take that one first. And so first of all, the first thing I would say is know what's expected of you and empower yourself to do it, and then do your job well.

I know these just seem like really basic things. Go above and beyond when you can. And as you seek to grow and develop yourself, be a good team player and reach out to others as you're doing that to help you grow and develop.

I'm going to share a few examples. And I've asked all of these individuals that I'm sharing examples of if I could do that. And so one is Jennifer Fonseca, who some of you may know, who is on my team.

A few years ago she had expressed an interest in doing diversity and inclusion and equity work. And it wasn't in her job description at the time. And yet, we decided that she would spend time doing it as it made sense and work with other experts in doing it.

And so she did that. Fast forward to now, where Jennifer is in this current time where we've really needed the skill-set that she brings, is facilitating things on diversity, equity, and inclusion, helping us design all kinds of things and working on another project with the inclusion of workforce diversity or something focused in their area. And so what I would say is continue to grow and develop, continue to build your skills. You never know when they're going to come into play and when that's going to be important for you to be able to use those skills

And so those are some of the things that I would offer in turn in addition to gigs. Gigs are something that we can all do. It may seem there may be some hurdles to doing gigs. And for those of you that don't know, gigs are when you take on a role in another area and you do that role. And what gigs can provide us is they can provide you additional opportunities.

And so that leads me to a story of another person. And that also leads me to say, in this time, as you're trying to grow and develop, if you think that you can expand your portfolio at all, and that's not always easy, let your supervisor know, have conversations with your supervisor about doing that. So the person that I'm going to share the story of is Bob Wakeman.

Some of you may know. Him he is one of our facilitators of Turning Point. So When I met Bob, it was early in my career. And he was working in payroll.

And any time throughout his career that he has had an opening or space, he has let his supervisor know. And he's asked for additional things that he could work on. And instead of being afraid to say I have an opening or I have time, he would utilize that to his advantage.

So what that led him to is to do HR generalist work. He worked in workforce policy and labor relations. And then that's led him to his role at the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Each and every step that he's made in his career path and in his career growth has been because he has spoken up and either said I want more to fill my plate, or I don't have enough to fill my plate being really honest about that and utilizing those opportunities to help himself grow and develop. And it has led him to where he is today. Jim.

JIM SHERIDAN: I had it on mute. Sorry. So yeah, I am thinking about what development can do for a person. And a lot of times the question seems to suggest that the best way to reason to develop would be to get promotions. And while there's certainly going to be a rough road to getting promotions these days and new opportunities for different jobs, in a way, you might want to-- what I've done in my career is having gone from a corporate kind of a ladder kind of situation to a point in my life, where I said what do I want for me, wasn't so much about the next promotion, but about the next skill, the next opportunity, the next area to be able to work in an area I'm interested in learning about or doing more with or where I could share any gifts I might have.

And so I don't think that a reason to develop is just for promotion. Although, certainly great, but a reason to develop might be to do your current job even better. And quite often, and one thing and promotions might free up at some point, if you've done your current job really well and stand out in that regard, you're going to be in people's minds for promotion, more than if you just say, I'd like to get a promotion and I know I can do it. I know, Kathy, you said this is true for you, it's been true for me to, most of the time when I've gotten a promotion, I'm already doing a good chunk of that level of work that promotion would require, where I'd like receive it, and so getting yourself ready. And I would say asking for opportunity to delve into those new things.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Moving on to the next selection. We asked online, what will be important for you as we look forward to the future? And I'm going to ask Maria Potter to read her submission.

MARIA POTTER: Thank you for that, Hei Hei. And thank you also, Kathy, and Jim for facilitating and asking these interesting and sometimes difficult questions. When I read that question on the survey, I thought a lot about it, like really hard and deep, because is it's unprecedented? We don't know where look we're going to be doing.

And my general conclusion was is it's going be exciting how we're going to come out come out the other end of this, but at the same time, are you going to-- you're not going to have the same job or the same position you had when this pandemic started. Some, the optimist would think about this as a highlight. They're already challenging for them, but then others like me, it was kind of scary. How am I going to adjust to perhaps a new role, new responsibilities that are going to be incorporated once we get out of the pandemic.

So it was just really what I wanted to bring forth and talk about is, how should employees prepare for it, basically the unknown? And our jobs going to be different. Our responsibilities are going to be there. How do we manage that? How do we look forward to that, and how do we prepare for that change?

KATHY BURKGREN: I can go first, Jim. And so the first thing that reminded me of is preparing for the unknown. Some of you know. Some of you aren't aware.

I was laid off from Cornell between 1984 and 1985, and talk about the unknown. I really didn't know what I was going to do. And at that time, what I decided is that I was never going to have myself in a position again where I had to wonder about whether I have the skill-set to do the job.

And so that is what prompted me to, a-- first of all, I got a new position at the time. And then I just decided I was going to learn everything I could, focus on my skill-set as much as I could, focus on my attitude as much as I could so that-- one of the things when I was laid off that helped me to get my new role is that my former supervisor had told my new supervisor, who was Hal Craft at the time, if any of you are familiar with the Harold D. Craft leadership program, had told him that I had a great attitude and transferable skills.

So as we go into this unknown, what I would say is whatever you can do to develop yourself so that you have a great attitude and that you can develop transferable skills-- I was a staff writer and a communications coordinator. And what I was then doing was an executive staff assistant doing house calendar and the director of administration calendar, doing a lot of logistical work, work that I had never done before and at the time using computers like I had never done before, because they weren't very new into the workplace. And so learning to do the buildings and properties committee, and also that's when Hal started the leadership programs. And so I learned to coordinate the leadership programs, and that led me to my next thing, which was I always wanted to be in education.

My undergrad degree was in education. And so what I would say is, while it's an unknown, the future is an unknown, going back to what Jim said, if we are always developing our skill sets, and we have a good attitude, and we are living the skills for success and the leadership skills for success, and I mean really living them-- and I would encourage each of you to go back and read through bills and say, am I doing this, am I not doing this-- then there will always be a position for you. I firmly, firmly believe that. And so while it can be the unknown, what do we have to do to prepare ourselves to be the best that we can be in the work that we do? I hope that helps.

MARIA POTTER: It does. Thank you.

JIM SHERIDAN: I would just add a model that came out of-- well, I think it was Warren Bennis and playing the military. It's the VUCA model. It stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. And so it seems like these times, particularly around or around a lot of things, maybe around development are volatility, things have changed so much.

So if things they suggest to do and things are changing so much is take some time and reflect. So you did that. It was just with the question that was offered. And it got you thinking.

So but, yeah, OK, what am I up against? What is going on? What could be possible? What positive things could be?

So just take some time to think. So during volatility, try to take the time to think to be calmer. And then because things are uncertain data gather, instead of assuming or thinking or going by the past, going to say what is possible? Who could I talk to that would know more about this?

Attend sessions like this one. Network with other people who wrestle with those things. Get information that can help you. And get reliable people that people you trust and resources you trust that are going to have a level head.

So it's volatile. So you take some space. It's uncertain. So you get as certain as you can by gathering data.

And then because it's big and complex, then you start to just say, well, maybe that's bigger than I can handle, but what small things can I do right now to focus on getting that next thing, that new skill, that new perspective? What little thing can I do? And how's that fit into bigger plan?

And because it's complex, it's easy to make it too complex to handle. So you just chop it down. And then it is ambiguous. We don't know what it's moving too really. And so because it's ambiguous, we might get hung up on that.

And so you test to see how things are going. You see if it's a better result. You're try something new. You see how that works. You see if it starting up to add up to something.

And then you go back to that volatility place and say, how are things now? What kind of thinking can I do? I really like that model as a way of kind of thinking about a lot of things during crisis or times of uncertainty, but it could be really applied to an ability to narrow down what I need to do and no one can promise.

Well, we don't have right now a path, a career path that says do this and then move you move to that, and then you move to this, and you take that, and now you're this. It's a much more open craziness in a way. So hopefully, model VUCA, V-U-C-A, might be helpful.

KATHY BURKGREN: And, Jim, I would add to that. When I said there's always a position for you, when I was laid off, I said '84, '85, it was actually '94, '95. I realized I said that wrong. There will always be a position for you.

The reality is I didn't know that there would be a position for me at Cornell. And so it's about now and then. And even in the future, what are we doing to prepare our skill sets for the

future? And another thing that I would highly encourage you to do, if you feel comfortable and I hope that you do, is to have conversations with your supervisor.

If you can understand, what are my strong points? What are my opportunities for development? I don't like to call them weaknesses. I don't know that they're weaknesses.

To me, they're just opportunities. They're waiting for us to develop them and to develop ourselves. And have those conversations. Have them with your colleagues.

And then think about what are you passionate about. What do you're truly passionate about? I was passionate about educating people.

I thought it was going to be educating people in high school. That's not the path that it ended up being for me. Yet, I'm still in the education field, so to speak.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Moving on to the third selection, Kit Tannenbaum submitted two responses. I'm going to ask that you do one. Then we're going to toggle into the Q&A.

I do ask all participants if you have any questions, please submit into the Q&A section of the Zoom. And I'll try to get to those. And then if there is time, we'll get to your second response Kit. Does that work?

KIT TANNENBAUM: Yeah. Yeah, that's good. So thank you to everyone involved in today's forum. It's truly valuable to be able to have a direct voice with administration and again, one of the many great reasons to work at Cornell.

I mean, I guess if I'm going to pick one piece that I would like to say, I think we touched on this slightly, but I will talk about this. So I think I really appreciate the Cornell's commitment and as Kathy and Jim, you're both saying, the support for folks and employees to develop skill sets and new areas of interest. I believe that it's critical-- something that I think would be really important and critical for the administration moving forward would be to provide explicit support of the initiative like we've seen with the administration's support or continuing work arrangements.

And I think employee's development being supported on a broader scale, that's an excellent work culture standard at Cornell. And going off of that, I would like to ask that the university consider-- reconsider how financial-- the financial resources are managed on a centralized level as it pertains to those gig opportunities, right now as it is with the employees home department needing to pay wages while employees participate in gigs for other departments does pose hurdles at times if the home department needs to deny the gig based on financial reasons. And I think that if we are able to centralize that those resources accordingly, the employee would still have the opportunity to make the positive contribution of Cornell and alignment with their professional exploration or skill development when they would otherwise be idle.

JIM SHERIDAN: Yeah, I would just say that there are going to be even more than just financial hurdles to some people being able to participate in gigs when a manager doesn't know the interests that an employee has and how passionate they are toward it. That can be a problem when a manager is trying to figure out how to get all the work done that they have to get done and they're struggling with a new way of doing things and can't figure out for themselves a new way of thinking about it. And structural things like how who pays for what, those have always been problems.

In the olden days when I was in my corporate job, they had a standard of central fund of 3% of entire payroll toward development opportunities that could be spread across. I don't know very many companies that do that kind of investment anymore, but what I do know is that those of us who take it upon ourselves to decide and manage our development, what we'd like to develop and what we want to grow and then communicate that to the proper people and demonstrate, again, I got to say you got to demonstrate strong competence in your current situations. I also think if you are helping your managers, a part of your development would be, I can take that off your plate.

I can be bringing this new skill. You won't have to do it anymore. You won't have to worry about this. I can do that for us, might give the manager something to think about in terms of willingness to invest that.

Kathy talked about talking to supervisors. And I can't stress that enough. It would build that partnership. Be a part of the answer for people-- your manager's problems. And that would help them.

I think it's also a good idea to-- as Maria Wolf would always say, pull out and work on the talent profile with your manager as well. What's in the talent profile? What do we want to add to that?

And then work together on creating the how-to even systemically. Now I think you have a good point, but I will say, if we could centralize that, that'd be great. And I would never say you can never do anything, but I would also say that's probably not going happen.

I guess that would not happen in the structure or with the worries that the university has financially. But I'm not in a position to know that. Kathy, anything to add?

KATHY BURKGREN: I would just say when we very started gigs-- and this was actually, we started a pilot program in 2005 in facilities and campus services and facilities crossing institution. When we started that, we tried to do something such that you could domino positions, meaning that you would have multiple people and gigs, and then you were only backfilling for one position. And that was still the department that initially asked for the gig. It was the one paying.

And I do think it's a really good model. And what I would say is if we can work together, work with supervisors, I'm always happy to talk with people, help people who are trying to figure this out, because I know we have done it for a number of years and gotten it to work out. Sometimes no money exchanges hands. So it's about thinking about what is it a full-time gig. Is it a part-time gig?

Is it going back to Bob Wakeman's example? He did gigs where he gave his-- didn't give-- somebody was still paying him full-time-- but his supervisor was allowing him to do that gig without a backfill. And I know that's happened in multiple positions.

So one of the things I would say is if you are interested in a gig and your challenged by how to make that happen, I'm happy to talk with you. I'm happy to talk with your supervisor. And let's just think creatively and innovatively about how we might make that happen.

HEI HEI DEPEW: OK, thank you. We don't have very much time left. I want to string together two questions that we got over the Q&A.

And I hope you guys can answer these. The first one is, if you are furloughed, can you still do a gig? And the second one is, do you know if there are any plans to cut or diminish the EDP program, CLASP, or Cornell Tuition Scholarship?

KATHY BURKGREN: So I will be honest. I cannot answer the furloughed question. I apologize for that. My gut instinct is that it's probably a no, but I really I don't know. And then the second part of that was-- what was the second part?

HEI HEI DEPEW: The second part is, do you know if there are any plans to cut or diminish the EDP employee degree program, CLASP, or Cornell Tuition Scholarship

KATHY BURKGREN: Yeah. So as Mary Opperman would say, we can never guarantee anything. Right now what I have heard her say a few times is that she knows of no plans for that to happen. And so that is available to us.

I would take advantage of it. I know I took advantage of continuing education. I took advantage of the employee degree program. I highly recommend them.

And again, if anybody is even considering that, I really encourage you to reach out to me. I'm happy to talk with you. I'm happy to talk with you about how I did it over a six year period with three young children. And I can't speak enough for that benefit that Cornell offers. It is a great benefit.

ADAM HOWELL: So unfortunately, as is often the case with these with our 30 minute forms, we're at time. I do what I mentioned to everybody watching that we still always have our open forums. And in many of our even topical ones have topics that can kind of overlap.

So if you did ask a question in the Q&A or there's some other piece of information that you wanted to learn about, you have other bites at the apple. And we'll try to get as much good information out there as possible, but I do think that we did get a great amount of information out there today.

I want to of course thank our panelists Kathy and Jim, thank you so much for being here and our staff questioners, Kit and Maria, thank you for being here. Hei Hei, as always, a great job.

And the Office of the Assemblies, Gina Giambattista and Wendy Treat, always doing so much great and hard work behind the scenes. One more thing before we go, I do want to mention that the Employee Assembly, we are still meeting throughout the summer. We are still working hard for all of you.

And I'm going to ask the Office of the Assemblies to please put into the chat the link to get on our email list if you want to. Get links and invites to our meetings that are open. We encourage staff to stop by. And there is oftentimes even more information that we can collect and get out to people in that venue as well.

So we encourage staff to participate and interact with us and in that forum as well. So with that, again, thank you all so much for your time and effort today. And to all the staff who joined us, I appreciate your time as well. And we'll see you at the next forum. So take care everybody.

KATHY BURKGREN: Thank you. Bye.

JIM SHERIDAN: Bye-bye.