With a workforce of 19,000 faculty and staff, it is impossible to provide one answer. Nor do we want to. Instead, we present a collection of stories that reflect the talent and commitment of those who help to make UBC a leading academic institution and one of Canada’s top employers.

The following stories do not represent a single department or a single campus; rather, they are stories from faculty and staff who have cultivated and helped shape the Focus on People framework since its earliest inception. No one story is more important than the other. Each story offers insight into successes and challenges, including how employee engagement, global citizenship and emerging leadership can all contribute to the development of a healthy, sustainable workplace.

Unique and authentic, these stories represent an important chapter in the milestone first year of the Focus on People initiative. To view the entire Focus on People Annual Report, visit www.focusonpeople.ubc.ca/annualreport and see how we are providing a strong foundation upon which to continue building a better workplace.
MEASURING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES AT UBC

MORE THAN 2,700 faculty and staff responded to UBC’s first Workplace Experiences Survey which was released in February 2009. Seventy per cent of the responses came from staff and 21% of the responses came from faculty. Our response rate is consistent and slightly better than the average response rate for this type of survey at educational institutions.

The survey was designed to measure the workplace experiences of those who work at the university. Faculty and staff were invited to give an honest and accurate reflection of what it is like to work at UBC. The survey was voluntary and anonymous and was administered by a third-party consulting firm to ensure confidentiality.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- More than 70% of respondents would recommend UBC as a good place to work.
- Nearly 65% of respondents felt a strong sense of commitment to the university.
- 70% of respondents said they were satisfied with their role or job.

Despite the positive responses, only 45% answered that they believe they have sufficient opportunity for advancement at UBC and only 43% believe the university is doing a good job of developing people to their full potential. Consistent with other organizations, more than 20% of our workforce feel that they cannot achieve an acceptable work-life balance.

“The results are a litmus text for us,” says Lisa Castle, Associate Vice-President, Human Resources. “We’ll use the survey results to identify and understand how the work experiences of our faculty and staff map to the five strategies outlined in Focus on People and where we should prioritize areas of concern.” The results of the survey will be used to plan for future Focus on People initiatives.

Survey results will be released to the UBC community in June 2009 through the Focus on People website, two Town Hall events and at various presentations on campus.

FIND OUT MORE...

Did you participate in the Workplace Experiences Survey? Find out how others like you responded by visiting www.focusonpeople.ubc.ca on June 8, 2009 to view the survey results, or join us at a Focus on People Town Hall where we will present a summary of the results in person.

Waltzer was a litmus text for us,” said Lisa Castle, Associate Vice-President, Human Resources. “We’ll use the survey results to identify and understand how the work experiences of our faculty and staff map to the five strategies outlined in Focus on People and where we should prioritize areas of concern.” The results of the survey will be used to plan for future Focus on People initiatives.

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By supporting our workplace

THE REAL SUCCESS of the university’s Focus on People framework lies at the department level, when a staff or faculty member has a positive work experience on a daily basis.

An Integration Team was developed to support departments in looking at their people practices and identifying where they could improve the workplace in a meaningful way for the people who work in the unit. The end goal is to create an action plan that not only aligns with the Focus on People principles, but also resonates with faculty and staff at the department level. Department plans will be shared and eventually shared online via the Focus on People website.

When the Integration Team first started their outreach services, they discovered some departments were already championing workplace practices and had been doing so for some time. That was the case for Melody Burton, Head Librarian at UBC Okanagan, who enlisted the help of the Integration Team to explore opportunities for creating a positive, healthy workplace for her staff.

After completing an assessment with the Integration Team and learning that her department was already doing many things that aligned with Focus on People, Melody was able to focus on what more they could do. Her end result was a strategic action plan for her department which consisted of coordinating efforts to promote professional development among staff, building a community of practice to encourage campus collaborations, and working more with her Vancouver colleagues.

“I want to build a team...a workplace that’s for everybody,” she says. “When managers lead by example and are actually participants, it makes a difference to staff and is an endorsement of a positive, full, healthy workplace. Your likelihood for success increases dramatically.”

At the Point Grey campus, Manpreet Dhillon, Business Operations Manager for the Office of Learning Technology was experiencing something similar with her department. Working with the Integration Team, she was surprised at the depth and significance of the various initiatives underway in her own department. “I knew we needed to change,” she says. “I just didn’t know what the process was going to be.”

Her completed action plan included two key priorities: dealing with the workload of her faculty and staff to aid in stress management, and finding more effective ways to work with her decentralized workforce as her faculty and staff are spread through campus locations and many have flexible working arrangements with virtual offices.

Some departments like the School of Population and Public Health chose to go the do-it-yourself route and developed their plans without the Integration Team. After creating a matrix of priorities and available resources, the department identified their top three initiatives: to improve their performance management system, promote health and well-being by offering lunch-hour exercise options, and create self-managed peer groups for exchanging best practices.

Inspired to take the first step? Go online to view sample action plans and DIY resources or to learn about the UBC Integration Team and the lessons learned this past year www.focusonpeople.ubc.ca/annualreport.
Unique Program Enables UBC Staff To Be Global Citizens

CLaire Moller was one of six UBC staff selected to participate in Uniterra’s Leave for Change, an international program that supports employee volunteerism in developing countries. UBC is one of three Canadian post secondary institutions participating in the Leave for Change program and entered into the partnership with Uniterra in 2008.

Through this unique program, UBC sends up to six volunteers abroad each year. UBC staff like Claire who have the skills and the passion to help those in need can apply for an overseas placement during their vacation time or annual leave.

Claire was excited about applying her technical knowledge in a meaningful context. As a User Experience Architect for UBC’s Enrollment Services, she was particularly interested in working directly with local communities. Claire was placed in a Website Designer for Women Against Rape (WAR), a crisis centre in Maun, Botswana that provides support to rape survivors and works to bring an end to gender-based violence.

“Claire believes strongly in working in Botswana that made her personal ethos and her work back in a way that reflected both her personal ethos and her work skills.” During her time in Maun, Claire found that she approached challenges a little differently than if she was at home.

“There was something about working in Botswana that made unexpected events or setbacks entirely manageable,” Claire recalls. “When we faced problems with internet connectivity or website hosting, we always seemed to find a way to make progress and work together. I think there’s something to be gained here, a perspective that focuses on what’s possible, not on what’s not working.”

To share stories and images of their enriching experiences, Leave for Change participants were encouraged to maintain a blog while overseas. The Leave for Change blog became a dynamic way for UBC staff to interact with fellow program participants, stay in touch with UBC colleagues, and document their journey of personal and professional growth. Upon returning, many of the participants still keep in touch with their volunteer organizations.

The inaugural group of UBC participants left for their volunteer assignments in the first quarter of 2009 and completed placements in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Malawi and Vietnam.

For all six participants, the volunteer experiences overseas have been immensely valuable, both personally and professionally. “I have a new depth of confidence in my abilities,” says Claire. “Working in another culture can be such a rich experience. I believe that our travel and intercultural experiences imbue us with understandings that serve us as we find ourselves in new and unfamiliar contexts.”

Meet all six 2008/2009 participants and see what lessons we learned in the inaugural year of the Leave for Change program by visiting www.focusonpeople.ubc.ca/annualReport.

BY BECOMING GLOBAL CITIZENS

Clark’s experience embodies UBC’s commitment to student and employee volunteerism which has made a healthy workplace possible.

The strategy formalized ongoing efforts to support employee volunteerism through a new Employee Volunteerism Program Fund. A number of developments have been implemented since the consultations, including the development of a childcare working group to address work-life and childcare issues on campus, monthly Pit Stop coffee socials sponsored by a different department with proceeds going to the United Way campaign, and the establishment of seven breastfeeding spaces on campus.

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Learn more about UBC Okanagan’s Healthy Workplace Culture Strategy online at www.ubc.ca/okanagan/healthystability/workplaceculture/health/workplaceculture.html.

The movement to build a healthy, sustaining workplace.

For the UBC Botanical Garden, program funds helped to create a Walk and Learn program where faculty and staff can combine learning with keeping active.

In the coming year, UBC anticipates another strong surge of applications as even more departments become involved in the development of a childcare working group to address work-life and childcare issues on campus, monthly Pit Stop coffee socials sponsored by a different department with proceeds going to the United Way campaign, and the establishment of seven breastfeeding spaces on campus.

The movement to build a healthy, sustaining workplace.

For the UBC Botanical Garden, program funds helped to create a Walk and Learn program where faculty and staff can combine learning with keeping active.

In the coming year, UBC anticipates another strong surge of applications as even more departments become involved in the initiative after the initial funding period. Funding is awarded in two $50,000 cycles, one in the fall and one in the spring and is adjudicated by a committee.

One of the recipients from the first round of funding was the UBC Department of Surgery. They developed an ‘I Ride To Work’ initiative that inspires staff to realize the personal and environmental benefits of cycling to work and be ambassadors for expanding the initiative in the future.

According to Damian Duffy, Managing Director of the Office of Pediatric Surgical Evaluation and Innovation, “I have a new depth of confidence in my abilities,” says Claire. “Working in another culture can be such a rich experience. I believe that our travel and intercultural experiences imbue us with understandings that serve us as we find ourselves in new and unfamiliar contexts.”

Meet all six 2008/2009 participants and see what lessons we learned in the inaugural year of the Leave for Change program by visiting www.focusonpeople.ubc.ca/annualReport.

New Healthy Workplace Program Finds Strength in Numbers

Okanagan Leads with Healthy Workplace Culture Strategy

UCB’s OKANAGAN CAMPUS made a healthy workplace a priority even before the university’s Focus on People framework was approved. In 2007, Okanagan faculty and staff adopted the Healthy Workplace Culture Strategy at their annual Health Symposium.

The strategy formalized a commitment and campus-wide focus on developing a sustainable, healthy workplace by having consultative discussions facilitated by the Provost and the Health Promotion Coordinator. By developing a Healthy Workplace, the University of British Columbia | 2008 Focus on People Annual Report

At UBC Okanagan, a Healthy Workplace Culture Strategy online at www.ubc.ca/okanagan/healthystability/workplaceculture/health/workplaceculture.html.

What makes a healthy workplace at UBC? Take our online poll between June and September: www.focusonpeople.ubc.ca/annualReport.
ONE IS THE DIRECTOR of UBC’s School of Music. Another is the Director of the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability. The third is Head of UBC’s Division of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. They each represent a different academic unit at UBC and have followed different paths to reach their current positions. But they all share a love for what they do and are committed to being effective leaders, something they credit UBC’s Academic Leadership Development Program (ALDP).

The ALDP helps new department heads transition into their roles by providing the professional development they need through their first two years in office. Academics often face a multitude of challenges when they step into their new leadership role. There is often a steep learning curve and some find themselves struggling to address department concerns, support a large team, or access available resources. For those who are recruited internationally, there are worries associated with relocation and settling into a new country, in addition to navigating the intricacies and complexities of UBC.

“They’re not a lot of signage when you begin an administrative role,” says Dr. Richard Kurth, who became Director of the School of Music in July 2007. “As a manager, you have to find information for people in your department.”

The challenge lies in not knowing where to look or who to ask, especially if you are new to the university like Dr. Gunilla Öberg. Gunilla, who worked in Sweden before landing her “dream job” as Director of the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability three years ago, was “really impressed by the people from UBC.” She found that the ALDP enabled her to establish key university contacts.

The program, a collaboration between the Department of Human Resources and the Centre for Teaching & Academic Growth (TAG), is comprehensive in providing valuable tools and resources to its participants. Program components consist of problem-based workshops that focus on topics such as goal setting and conflict resolution, as well as studio sessions which allow participants to bring the issues or projects they are currently working on.

One-on-one coaching support, peer mentoring and an online e-learning platform are also available.

This year, more than 32 participants benefited from the program. Participation rates have doubled since the program’s inception in 2006 and Gary Poole, Director of TAG, is energized by the response rate and anticipates continued growth in the year ahead.

Are you a new Department Head or Director committed to becoming an effective leader? Visit www.aldp.ubc.ca to learn more about the ALDP. You can also find out how we are creating a community of knowledge for new managers at UBC at www.focusonpeople.ubc.ca/annualreport.

For Dr. Andrea Townsend, Clinical Assistant Professor and Head of the UBC Division of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, the ALDP provided a great learning experience. In her dual role, every process and deadline is new to her, and while she was aware of UBC’s organizational structure, she “didn’t fully appreciate the inner workings” until she participated in the program.

Now, for the first time, she feels “really engaged and very much a part of the hospital and UBC.”

“Within a few years of working here, I became aware that UBC is a place where curiosity is nurtured, good work is celebrated, and enthusiasm opens the window of opportunity. The collective energy of the students and faculty create a workplace that I never would have expected from the outside looking in.”

Why Did You Join UBC?

Dr. Gunilla Öberg (left) and Dr. Richard Kurth benefited from participating in UBC’s Academic Development Leadership Program when they began their new Director roles.

UBC IS HOME to more than 19,000 faculty and staff who make up the social fabric of our academic institution. Knowing why people joined UBC provides insight into how we can continue to retain and support our people. We went to members of the UBC community to find out what attracted them to UBC.

Why Did You Join UBC?

VINCENT DURONIO FACULTY OF MEDICINE YEARS AT UBC: SINCE 1992

“Growing up in Ontario, I came to UBC after my post-doctoral training. I fell in love with Vancouver on my first visit for the job interview and I’ve never regretted the decision to come. Our family is now well entrenched in local life and Vancouver has become our home.”

ANNE-RAE VASQUEZ OFFICE OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGY YEARS AT UBC: SINCE 1991

“I am grateful to be able to work in such a flexible and respectful environment. Having to commute from Surrey has been bearable because I work from home two days a week and enjoy a flex day environment. Having to commute from Surrey has been bearable because I work from home two days a week and enjoy a flex day environment.”

LAURA LAVERDURE UBC ROBSON SQUARE YEARS AT UBC: SINCE 2006

“As a student just out of university, UBC offered the job training, flexibility and security to gain valuable work experience while providing opportunities to pursue and develop my own academic interests and career goals. I have learned the ins and outs of freelance article writing, travelled around Europe and continued my post secondary education past the BA all within the comfort of job security and the multitude of benefits that UBC provides.”

CLAUDE DESMARAIS CRITICAL STUDIES YEARS AT UBC: SINCE 2008

“I was enticed by inquisitive and critically-minded colleagues, the university’s spirit, and embarking on this new venture called UBC Okanagan. Faculty, staff, and students that are bright and engaged, yet friendly and down to earth, and an administration that actively seeks to promote community and is open to new ideas were further ingredients that drew me to UBC-O. Did I mention the beautiful Okanagan and the dramatic mountains backdrop on my way to work?”

YOUR VIEWPOINT

TO READ MORE STORIES FROM OUR ANNUAL REPORT OR TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK, VISIT WWW.FOCUSONPEOPLE.UBC.CA/ANNUALREPORT.