

## Talent Pools Position Employees for New Opportunities



Thirty-two percent of all West Chester University employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years. That's a challenge that the Office of Human Resources has been preparing for throughout the last decade, says Senior Manager for Employment, Information & Risk Services Kate Bove.

Challenges, of course, also bring opportunities. In this case, it means openings for WCU employees who are prepared to step into roles with greater responsibilities or simply different roles, better suited to their interests than their present positions.

"We want to develop and retain existing WCU talent, as well as minimize lengthy searches and lost institutional memory," notes Bove. "In an effort to achieve this, we have made changes to hiring policies. We also have developed a strategic planning instrument - called talent pools - on our Halogen performance management system. The intent is to provide a tool to help employees better prepare themselves to compete effectively for upcoming vacancies that they may be interested in."

Succession planning is initially being rolled out to non-represented employees. Bove says that the Office of Human Resources is interested in seeing constituencies other than managers also take advantage of the Halogen system.

When non-represented employees go through their annual appraisal/career planning process this summer, they will have the option to speak to their managers regarding talent pools they are interested in, based on competencies in six key areas: decision making, achieving results, change management, communication, relational skills, and development.

Employees will be added to the pools and assessments will be run to determine areas of development based upon the assigned competencies to the talent pool. As part of the assessment, development plans can be tailored to these competencies. For example, a non-supervisory manager who would like to be in a supervisory management role would need communication skills that include the ability to give effective feedback.

When openings occur, due to retirement or any other reason, Human Resources can turn to these talent pools in concert with traditional recruitment methods. "The goal is to have members of talent pools ready to fill staffing needs as they arise," says Bove.

“Talent pools are driven by each employee’s initiative and desire to be identified for new roles,” stresses Bove. “With this system, employees are empowered to take action and position themselves for success.”

Beyond the succession planning process, Bove suggests a number of other ways for employees to move their careers forward at WCU:

- Participate in training and coaching opportunities offered by the Office of Human Resources.
- Take advantage of tuition waivers. Fifty-five of your fellow employees did so this past academic year.
- Develop soft skills and manage your image actively.
- Get involved on committees and task forces with leaders from other University divisions. This will increase your skills and experiences while increasing your visibility.
- Do your current job well before aspiring to another position.
- Think more broadly about possible career directions. Instead of focusing exclusively on moving within your department or division, think about developing skills that could be used in lateral or higher level positions in other divisions. Also identify existing skills that are transferrable to another position.

Areas of expected growth at the University include distance education, environmental safety and sustainability, information services, research, and entrepreneurship, reports Bove.

“The goal of using Halogen’s succession planning tool is to help facilitate conversations and create career development plans so we can open more opportunities for employees to advance and be engaged in their careers at the University,” says Bove. “In addition, Halogen resources will help University leaders track the risk of losing key employees and positions, and engage them in conversations and where appropriate, provide opportunities to retain that talent.”

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