A Survey on Professional Development for Staff
University of Montana
2015-2016

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Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to seek information on current UM staff’s access to and participation in professional development opportunities. The central question that helped guide this study was: “How do University of Montana staff describe their motivation to participate in professional development opportunities?” The central question was never asked of the participants. Instead, it helped guide the line of questioning when collecting data. This survey was distributed to University of Montana classified and contract staff through Qualtrics in the autumn semester of 2015. Hardcopies were distributed to employment areas where online access was a known impediment to participation (skilled crafts and service worker areas). There were 386 Qualtrics responses and 11 hard copy responses for a total of 397 responses. Answering was optional, and participants could withdraw from the survey at any time.

For the purposes of this survey,

“Professional development is defined as the ongoing process of improving and increasing capabilities and advancing skills and expertise of staff in order to enable enhancement or advancement in a chosen career. Professional Development shall also include improving wellness, personal growth, and opportunities to build networks of mentors within the university system in an effort to implement co-development among staff. Professional development shall extend beyond job classification and currently-assigned duties.”

Description of the Analysis

For purposes of this study, a qualitative phenomenological perspective was used. From this perspective, the researchers concentrated on the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants. Data collection occurred during the fall semester of 2015. Although there are several ways to conduct phenomenological research, the researchers in this study used Moussakas’ (1994) approach because it “helps provide a structured approach for novice researchers” (p. 83). In this approach, the researchers analyzed the data by reducing the information to significant statements which they then combined into themes. After reducing the information to themes, the researchers developed a textual description of the experiences of the participants (what they experienced), a structural description of staff experiences (how they experienced professional development in terms of conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience (p. 80).

After reviewing the surveys, the researchers decontextualized the transcriptions. This included pointing out key statements and separating from the context of the entire survey. The researchers then re-contextualized the material. This included going through the surveys and highlighting different and similar words and categories and speaking about the similarities and differences of each survey. After they decontextualized and re-contextualized the surveys, themes started to materialize. The themes that emerged from this survey include: time; supervisor support; finances; and enthusiasm. Finally, the researchers were able to capture an overall essence of the experience of UM staff members. According to Creswell (2013), “Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (p. 76). After conducting this study, it is clear the participants had many similar feelings, thoughts, and experiences about professional development. The researchers determined there are multiple reasons staff members are motivated to pursue professional development opportunities.
The first theme, “time”

This theme emerged because most of the participants commented on this as a barrier to professional development. For most staff members, taking away time from work to attend professional development opportunities is difficult to do. However, it seemed most of the participants acknowledged that, although professional development opportunities take them away from their work, professional development is important. One participant stated, “I believe professional development is very important for the University, especially in the IT sector, considering the fast pace of change. I personally need to keep that in mind and make sure that, while we’re all busy, we still need to make time for advancing the quality of our employees.” Another participant described, “I think professional development at UM is outstanding and clearly an important priority of UM. It’s great UM invests so much into their staff and faculty. I only wish I felt like I could afford to take more time to participate without drowning in a backlog of work upon return!”

The second theme, “support”

The second theme includes staff’s supervisor support. Most participants stated they feel that they have support from their supervisor to attend professional development opportunities. 55% of the responses rated their department as an “A” or “B” in promoting professional development opportunities. One participant stated, “I have taken many opportunities for professional development while working at UM. I have always been encouraged to take these by my supervisor.” It is important to note 71% of the participants stated it was their own primary responsibility to know what professional development opportunities are available and also their responsibility for directing the process.

The third theme, “finances”

Finances was presented as a consistent factor in the surveys. This was the biggest obstacle for many employees in attending off-campus professional development opportunities. A majority of the responses stated most of the professional development opportunities they have attended were at no cost to the employee. One participant stated, “It would be nice if there was a pool of money that any staff member could apply for to help out in funding development opportunities. These are hardly ever written into grants.” Another respondent described, “I have an extremely limited training budget for my staff. In order to send my staff to training the entire budget can be spent on one person. At that rate, the best my staff can expect is one training program every seven years. That is ridiculously inadequate. The irony of an institution of higher learning that doesn’t provide an adequate budget for training is not lost on its employees.”

The fourth theme, “enthusiasm”

Most participants indicated that UM is doing an excellent job providing professional development opportunities. “There are a large number of amazing training and opportunities. In my four universities that I have worked for, UM, by far, does the most for their staff in on-campus trainings and professional development.” Enthusiasm helps describe the survey participant’s consistent perception of professional development. While many participants indicated professional development is important, many participants also stated they would only participate in professional development if it led to career advancement. “I feel like I have hit a ceiling in regards to where I can grow at UM.” Another replied, “I don’t know if I can develop professionally any further.” One participant requested, “Please provide professional development opportunities via live video streaming or by sending an individual to Hamilton so that Bitterroot College employees can participate.”
Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of UM staff members to better understand their motivations to participate in professional development opportunities. The central question guiding this study was, “How do University of Montana staff describe their motivation to participate in professional development opportunities?” This central question influenced the overall purpose of this study, and, in turn, helped guide the data collection process. The survey analysis revealed an overarching theme of “opportunity.” “Opportunity” helps illustrate the common experiences of all participants. Some UM staff members see professional development as an “opportunity” to help them advance professionally, whereas others do not. Motivation levels for professional development increase and decrease throughout employment, subject to influences of the four themes: difficulty balancing work and personal life (when time is required outside of the weekly work schedule) and general time constraints, supervisor support; financial concerns; and enthusiasm for their work environment and professional development opportunities.

In 2012, Staff Senate conducted a survey on job satisfaction. Staff at UM were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement, “UM offers the training or education that I need to grow in my job.” Only about 40% of the staff agreed. Since 2012, Human Resources at UM has increased their professional development offerings for employees. It is encouraging to see that the results from the 2015 survey indicated that only 10% of UM staff members believe there is a lack of support for staff professional development from campus administration and supervisors. UM administrators should continue to recognize that employee motivation is an important element in the retention of their employees. Supervisors should be supportive of professional development opportunities and continue to break through barriers to help their employees remain lifelong learners.
1. What is your employee designation?

There were 269 classified staff members, 92 contract professionals, and 9 employees that identified in the “other” category.

- Classified Staff (269)
- Contract Professional (92)
- Other (9)

2. What gender do you identify with?

93 males, 263 females, 1 other, and 12 employees preferred not to identify.

- Male (93)
- Female (263)
- Other (1)
- I do not wish to identify (12)

3. What is the highest level of education that you have received?

- High School degree or GED (16)
- Some College (64)
- Bachelor’s degree (151)
- Master’s degree (107)
- Doctorate degree (17)
- Other (12)

4. Are you currently taking classes at UM or through another higher education institution? If yes, please indicate what type of classes/program.

- Yes (38)
- No (329)

5. Do you supervise others? (Not including student employees). If no, skip to #11

- Yes (137)
- No (224)
6. Who do you supervise? In the boxes below, please include the number of people you supervise.

Of the 137 people that answered this question, the numbers varied across the board. Overall, a range of supervising one staff member to 50 staff members was documented. 26 people stated that they supervised 1-25 professionals and 33 people answered that they supervised “others” and listed temporary workers.

7. To what degree do you encourage those that you supervise to participate in professional development activities?

131 of the 137 respondents who indicated they supervise others answered this question. 42 respondents or 32% stated they “always” encourage professional development. 4 respondents, or 3%, stated they never encourage professional development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note that although 32% of the supervisors feel they always encourage professional development for their employees, only 17% of the employees feel this is true.

8. To what degree do you allow those whom you supervise to participate in professional development activities?

130 of the 137 respondents who indicated they supervise others answered this question. 75 respondents or 58% stated that they “always” allow professional development. 5 respondents, or 4%, stated they never allow professional development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. From your perspective as a supervisor, what challenges do you face in encouraging/allowing your employees from participating in professional development activities?

Of the 130 responses, 50% stated there is not enough time or the office is too busy to have the employees absent from their position for professional development activities. 40% of the respondents stated that there is no departmental coverage that would allow them to leave for any professional activities. Another major reason for not participating in professional activities, at 48%, was the expense involved in sending employees to different trainings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASON</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too busy/no time   Similar, most frequent barrier is time constraints</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee has not expressed an interest</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No office/department coverage</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient times for on-campus opportunities</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest in topics provided on-campus</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient times for off-campus opportunities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not informed about availability</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/parking</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. How do you encourage professional development?

Of the 92 responses, supervisors remarked that they encourage their staff to attend professional development opportunities by simply letting them know about opportunities at their meetings or by forwarding information to them about topics that might be beneficial.

- During meetings
- Verbal and written communication
- Provide time to learn
- Letting employees know about trainings
- Encouraging employees to attend trainings
- Forwarding emails about upcoming trainings/seminars
- Providing the time and financial resources for trainings
- Supporting employees in learning new things
- Active mentorship
- Lead by example
- Discuss long range goals and find opportunities that match
- Forward classes to employee that would benefit from the class
- I make strong suggestions to attend trainings
- Staff receives notices and they need to make the request to attend

11. What professional development opportunities do you attend?

Of the 270 responses, most of the trainings were at no cost to the employee. IT, HR and Wellness seminars were some of the top seminars attended. 39 respondents stated they have not participated in any professional development opportunities. The top 37 responses are listed below.

- Microsoft Access
- Annual Conference in my area of profession
- HR workshops
- IT short courses
- MUS Wellness Webinars
- Staff Ambassadors
- Only things that won’t require me to give up lunch
- Email Etiquette, Working Styles, Time Management, Payroll, Banner, GrizMart, Cascade
- Leadership Training, Supervising Others, Employee Conflict, Teamwork
- Moodle
- Missoula Interfaith Collaborative
- Classes to maintain my professional license
- Leadership Forum
- NACADA Conference
- National Conferences
- Only those offered on campus
- Technical training – software/computer
- Business Services Roundtable
- Free/Freemium External Trainings Online
- Active Shooter / Office Safety
- Suicide prevention
- Title IX
- Coursera
- Natural Resource Management
- Counseling Services
- Not In Our State
- DiverseU
- Continuing medical education
- ACUI conference
- QuestMT conference
- Northern Rockies Training Center courses
- UnConference
- Cyber Security Training
- Radiological State conference
- Minority Cultural Safety Training
- CASE conference
- NCAA forums
12. To what degree does your supervisor encourage you to participate in professional development activities?

There were 327 total responses for this question. 29% of the respondents stated that they are “sometimes” encouraged where 24% stated that they were “often” encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER</th>
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<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note that 14% of employees surveyed feel they are never encouraged to attend professional development opportunities whereas only 3% of the supervisors surveyed reported that they never encouraged employees to attend professional development opportunities.

13. To what degree does your supervisor allow you to participate in professional development activities?

The survey attempted to define how often staff members asked to attend Professional development activities but were denied the opportunity by their supervisors. In question #12 above, they were asked to indicate if their supervisors encourage them to attend professional development which would indicate the supervisor was taking initiative. Question #13 implies initiative was taken by the staff member. While 32% of the staff members answering #12 indicate they are not encouraged to participate in professional development activities, in #13 only 12% indicate that they are never or rarely “allowed” to participate. This would seem to indicate that, if a staff member requests professional development, they are given the means to do so by their supervisor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. What barriers or challenges prevent you from participating in professional development opportunities?

Of the 317 responses, the top barriers or challenges that prevented the responder from participating in professional development opportunities included the lack of time to attend training, expense, inconvenient timing for when the training is offered, and no office/department coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too busy/no time</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient times for on-campus opportunities</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No office/department coverage</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest in topics provided on-campus</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient times for off-campus opportunities</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not informed about availability</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of encouragement from supervisor to attend</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/parking</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor does not allow leave time</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest in professional development</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Other” responses that did not reflect options above included:

- Trainings are not specific to the job or in depth enough to be relevant for the respondent’s job duties (6)
- New employees did not feel they had enough time to learn about the opportunities (3)
- Trainings conflict with personal interests (such as family commitments) or time (2)
- Trainings are not located on their campus, such as the Bitterroot College and Missoula College (2)
- New or more diverse topics should be offered (2)
- Trainings lacked incentive, such as promotion or money (1)
- More advanced notice should be provided (1)
15. How would you grade your department in promoting professional development opportunities?

Of the 313 responses, 55% gave an “A” or “B” for their department in promoting professional development opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Would you be willing to identify your department?

Respondents were 50/50% willing to identify their department. 158 responded No, and 160 responded Yes.

17. What barriers do you feel your department faces in sending employees to professional development opportunities?

Of the 345 responses, the top barriers the respondent felt their department faced in sending employees to professional development opportunities included budget and funding, office/coverage or scheduling, and demanding workload in terms that they are too busy or do not have time. Some participants expressed that there are not relevant and/or valuable trainings available that relate to their job and interests that are convenient, primarily that there are not valuable trainings that are feasible to attend with limitations on budget and travel. Some participants also expressed a lack of support from supervisors for various reasons. Many other comments did not fall into these categories and are detailed below. Some employees stated that there were no barriers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget/Funding</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Coverage/Scheduling</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding Workload</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of relevant or valuable training opportunities that are convenient.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supervisor support due to lack of interest/need for employees to receive professional development.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the more specific comments from each section have been included in the following information.
Budget/Funding

- Expense is really the only thing to attend professional development off-campus. When budgets are strong this is supported, but there will never be enough money to do all we want to do.
- Expense primarily. The IT field changes so rapidly, that the professional development investment is continuous. I have been lucky in my area in that I have staff that are generally responsive to being challenged and willing to participate in development opportunities. I also am lucky to have an operational budget that I define. However, as with everyone, this budget is ever shrinking.
- Financial expenses for out of state opportunities, but they work hard to make it possible or rotate employees.
- Lack of budget items for: education, professional membership, travel, educational materials.
- My dept. has limited money for travel to conferences. It can afford less expensive trainings that are held in the region. There is not much encouragement to attend from the supervisors, but many of us underlings talk about and attend trainings held by HRS.
- The opportunities are encouraged if the budget allows, but that has been cut from our budget the last few years.
- There is never enough funding, since none of the offerings on campus would pertain to what I do.
- We never have enough money to do what would be appropriate for our employees that require CE credits for their licensure.
- Cost mostly. Often relevant courses require travel.
- We utilize the on-campus resources but cannot afford to send anyone to off-campus opportunities.
- Coverage for when the employee is gone; commuting to Missoula from the Bitterroot College for professional development is not cost effective because travel reimbursement is $55 per round trip to Missoula.
- Many other comments were simply “Money,” “Cost,” “Financial Resources,” “Expense,” and “Budget.”

Office Coverage/Scheduling

- Employees are too busy doing their jobs while supervisors are out for lunch, traveling, meetings, golfing in tournaments.
- In my case I am typically the only one covering the front office. If we do not have a front desk/work study I can’t leave. I tried to take a course last spring and I was able to attend the class only once through the whole semester.
- Inconvenient times, lack of coverage, and expense (for off-campus trainings).
- Lack of coverage for job duties when I’m gone. My job is a dead end job.
- Lack of coverage for front office duties cashiering.
- Sever budget cuts have reduced staffing to the point where there simply is not coverage for participating in such opportunities.
- SoB relies heavily on staff being available. Training, etc. interfere with this.
• The only barrier would be scheduling issues - having random meetings come up during the times of professional development opportunities.

• There are only two people working in my office, myself and my boss. It is very hard to find time to come to development opportunities with only two of us to work together in covering the office. It is especially difficult when most development opportunities are only available during the semester, when we are very busy in the office. I would love to see more opportunities in the summer and winter.

• There is only one person to cover the main office between 8-5, which not only prevents me from taking lunch, breaks, etc. but also from participating in professional development opportunities.

• Too few employees. If I’m gone, who will cover? If somebody is covering for me, I assume that means I’m not on the clock for the professional development. Pay here is already so low I can’t waste time off the clock.

**Demanding Workload**

• Lack of time is the biggest barrier. We are so busy with payroll deadlines and other regulatory deadlines that those usually take priority over professional development opportunities. The other barrier is cost. If it’s free and I have the time, then it’s no problem. If there are expenses to attend then usually we don’t have the budget for it.

• Many of the staff positions in DBS are unable to complete their duties during the work day as it is; they don’t feel they have time to complete what they need to do.

• Pace of the day to day operations - just not enough time to do everything and attend professional development opportunities

• The workload in my one-person office means if I’m not here getting my work done, it’s not getting done.

• Time. As more and more responsibilities are put upon staff, there is rarely enough time to get day-to-day activities completed, let alone other activities. The topics seem somewhat interesting, but not when weighed against the loss of time in the office.

• Time. Often opportunities are offered during our peak event times and with such a small office, it is is sometimes difficult to get away. If there could be multiple times/dates for some professional development opportunities, there would be a greater chance that some from my office could attend.

• We are short staffed so when we see a professional development opportunity I have to look around and see what it would do to my co-workers if I attended.

• When opportunities are offered during advising season or other super busy times I don’t feel that I can be out of the office. For example, several workshops I’d normally attend were offered in October 2015 but it was too close to advising, or application for professional programs and graduation application due dates (Oct. 1 and Oct. 30 respectively).

**Other**

• Gender bias. Males in department encouraged, females belittled.

• No awareness, distrust of other UM departments, isolationism.

• Supervisors are not informed about opportunities.
• I am not even aware there are professional development opportunities. It really is not a question of permission but rather one of time and knowledge of said opportunities.

• I believe we get the notices but they are not really highlighted or promoted in the office so awareness may be one of the bigger barriers. Timing and funding (if there is a fee attached) have also been issues.

• There are no incentives in H & S as we were told we could never be promoted and rarely given raises by the Dean’s office.

• We can go to all sorts of professional development opportunities, but when the University fails to promote you for things we supposedly learn in these opportunities, it’s really not worth putting forth the effort.

• First there is very little opportunity for any kind of advancement in our department. / Most of what is needed is highly technical training.

• Opportunities for professional growth and networking could potentially lead to staff leaving current positions.

• There appears to be sufficient funding, so I’m not sure what the barriers are. I asked to attend one of two nearby conferences this year, volunteering to drive and to stay with relatives to save money. My supervisor’s supervisor, who has control of professional development for our office, said “well, I’m not giving you an answer” after I asked twice for each opportunity when I first became aware of them. Then, right when the early bird registration was ending for one of the opportunities, I was told I could attend. However, since my original ask had been several months ago, and I had not yet received an answer, by the time the offer came, I already had a commitment on the dates.

• I don’t feel like I can force them to attend professional development offerings. Some of the staff are actively taking courses towards degrees and they certainly don’t have time for more.

• My experience has been that the department admin think they already have the internal expertise they need for junior staff to learn from and they pigeonhole individuals into roles and responsibilities based more on likability of an employee rather than skills and potential.

**Lack of relevant or valuable training opportunities that are convenient**

• Having the right topics that employees need to learn. Finding out about the events earlier enough to schedule them in. Not everyone in our department gets the emails. How can people sign up to know about events?

• I work at Missoula College, so any event on the mountain campus adds up to another hour of travel time (30 minutes each way); this makes it challenging to attend workshops during the our busier office times.

• Lack of interesting/appropriate topics. Also, attending professional development never results in anything ... no promotion, no pay increase. It just simply isn't worth attending professional development. And I speak from experience having worked on campus almost 30 years. No professional development I’ve attended ever resulted in anything except time away from the office.

• Lack of resources, primarily. For on-campus opportunities, many conferences, workshops, etc. are not necessarily applicable to the work I am doing.

• Mass email sometimes does not apply to my specific program.

• Most are a waste of time for a technical staff member.

• No real barriers just have not found a good topic that has not been repeated.
• No relevance to the work here; they will keep doing things as they always have done them; staff are peons and only need to do as they are told.
• Not a lot of useful topics being taught. Not a lot of interest in what is being taught.
• Off campus opportunities are great. The available of topical on campus opportunities is quite limited.
• Technical trainings are hard get to and expensive.

Lack of supervisor support due to lack of interest/need for employees to receive professional development.

• Department does not recognize need for professional development.
• Lack of supervisor support. My supervisor sees it as a worker down in the department and I cannot be spared.
• Lack of understanding in particular field and necessity for employees to stay engaged.
• Manager needs to be replaced with someone who has better people skills.
• No staff professional development encouraged.
• Supervisor does not see value in it or does not think it is an important component to employment. Do not feel my supervisor sees that as a piece of the job. She attends but would not think it is something her staff should be doing.
• Supervisor doesn’t think it is necessary.

18. Please select the top five professional development topics that interest you:

Staff were asked to review a list of 18 professional development topics and to select up to five of the items that interested them. In addition to the 18 choices, they were provided five “write-in” answers.

The highest count items focus on:

1) Gaining the knowledge, skills and abilities to advance professionally
2) Living a healthier life and managing stress
3) Improving communication skills and managing conflict
4) Developing and discussing leadership skills. 3) and 4) had the same count

These results differ slightly from the 2012 Staff Senate Job Satisfaction Survey where staff were provided the same list and the highest count items were:

1) Improving communication skills and managing conflict
2) Living a healthier life and managing stress
3) Learning best practices in supervision and advanced management

While communication and wellness were in the top three responses in both the 2012 and 2015 surveys, the most recent survey indicated that professional development and advancing in their careers is most important to UM staff.

Within the write-in categories, 41 respondents provided 60 responses. The majority of the responses, 26, indicated a desire to improve technical computers skills in some area, from web design and programming to learning specific
software programs. The remainder of the responses focused mainly on specific skills people need to perform their jobs, some of them technical in nature. It is important to note there was not a technical or computer related topic for respondents to choose from in the original professional development list.

19. **When it comes to knowing what professional development opportunities are available for you to participate in, who is responsible for directing this process?**

Out of 307 responses, the majority of people, 219, indicated that it is primarily their responsibility or mostly their responsibility to know what professional development opportunities are available to them, and they are responsible for directing the process. 63 people answered that it is equally their responsibility and their supervisors. Only 13 people believed it was mostly or primarily their supervisors’ responsibility to know what professional development opportunities are available for their staff and for directing the process. 12 people responded “other” and 11 comments did not provide substantial clarification as to who is responsible for knowing what professional development opportunities are available and who is responsible for directing the process. This indicates a majority of staff who answered this survey question take responsibility in knowing about or seeking out professional development opportunities.

20. **When you pursue learning, whether taking classes or workshops, attending conferences or participating on University committees, you demonstrate a commitment to professional development that will benefit you and add to your skill set. How important would it be for you to receive a University of Montana certificate for completing a series of designated workshops, trainings or activities?**

A total of 303 people answered this question and 113 people answered that it is extremely important, very important or important for them to receive a University of Montana certificate for completing a series of designated workshops, trainings or activities. 98 people answered that it is somewhat important and 92 people answered that it is not important. This seems to indicate that among the people who completed this survey question, they would like to see some kind of certificate program at UM for completing a series of designated workshops, trainings or activities.
21. Is there anything that you would like to share regarding professional development with UM Staff Senate?

The 98 responses to this open-ended question included a wide array of comments that can be placed into the following categories:

- General positive comments (23)
- Other (20)
- Time and budget constraints (14)
- Alternative training times and methods (13)
- No comment (12)
- Administration and supervisor support (10)
- Career advancement (6)
General Positive Comments

Twenty-three out of 98 respondents (23.45%) provided positive feedback, thanking HRS for providing the staff development programming and Staff Senate for devoting attention to the topic of Staff Professional development.

- I have taken many opportunities for professional development while working at UM. I have always been encouraged to take these by my supervisor.
- There are lots of professional development opportunities on campus.
- Most professional development classes I’ve been to that have been offered by the University have been excellent.
- Keep up the good work that you do!
- I think this is a critically important area that is often overlooked. I’m glad that you are working on this issue. Thanks!
- Keep up the great work!
- There are a large number of amazing training and opportunities. In my 4 universities I have worked for, UM by far does the most for their staff in on-campus trainings and professional development.
- Relatively new, so far the opportunities on campus have been very good. I will want to look at other opportunities for development off campus that will assist me in my position, just not aware of them at this point.
- I think you are doing a good job of informing staff about issues and opportunities on campus.
- I think the Wellness Program is superb - thanks for all the great opportunities you have given us to lead healthier lives. This means a lot to me. I really liked how the meditation class met for multiple weeks, allowing us to do some extended learning and personal growth.
- Human Resource Services is providing an excellent Training & Development program to ALL employees, thanks to Cindy Boies!
- Thank you for all of the work you folks do.
- This is a great way to continue promoting professional development internally and free. It is great to have the opportunities to attend these sessions while at work, and on campus, so that I can get the skills I need to do better on the job and in my personal life outside of work. I appreciate the consideration and efforts that are made to improve our lives overall. Thank you.
- I am pleased to see a good choice of professional development workshops being offered again on campus and hope it can continue.
- Thanks for doing this survey. I hope the information can be used to effect positive change.
- Thanks for taking the time to find out what people think!
- Great job!
- The trainings I have attended have been very beneficial.
- Excellent.
• I feel the professional development program has been growing and has a lot to offer. I feel the employees are very fortunate to have so many training opportunities available to them. Training was something I had to advocate for my staff at my last place of employment.

• UM has done the best job of providing training for all aspects of professional development I’ve ever experienced. My past positions were all very good, but I’d say UM has been exceptional in my 15+ years working here.

• You do a good job!

• The opportunities provided have been varied and useful. Keep it up.

Other
This category (20 out of 98 responses, or 20.41%) includes a variety of comments that did not fit in elsewhere. Most of these responses weren’t connected in any way, but there a few that addressed the following. Those who are close to retirement may not be interested in professional development, but others would like to see the professional development program expanded: More workshops, active participants, and a university that supports its staff members and their growth. This could combat the low morale and help improve both staff and student retention.

• Morale is low.

• Staff is an investment. The more that staff feels valued, and valuable, the more energy they will expend in sharing that feeling with students.

• The University of Montana needs to vigorously promote professional development in order to retain staff. Staff makes little money; it would be good if we had more reasons to work for the university. Professional development could be a key component of job satisfaction here and, with dwindling budgets, could give some hope for the future.

• I appreciate the attention to this subject. Classified staff (other than faculty) I think often feel taken for granted, underappreciated and undervalued on this campus, not to mention overworked and underpaid.

• This is an interesting topic. I treat myself differently than I do my staff. I feel that as a professional it is my responsibility to invest in my personal growth. Thus, I spend my personal financial and time resources on my development and don’t look for much from the University. However, I oversee a division of 21 people, where I feel that it is my responsibility to use my operational budget to invest in their development opportunities.

• If the GRE weren’t required for graduate school I would be more inclined to work toward a higher degree.

• Please stop doing these over the noon hour or provide lunch (even if it is a small snack).

• Good luck, you’re going to need it.

• More workshops.

• It would be extremely beneficial to me if employees under .75 FTE were allowed any partial tuition waivers in order to continue education. I understand this is a BOR issue.

• I am hoping with our new ACIO we will have the opportunity for more training.

• I plan to retire next year so not really interested in professional development.

• I appreciated it in the past. I have done the same work for over 19 years, and I’m very clear about what I’m doing. I pay attention to the changes that have to do with my duties, and apply those to what I do.
• It would be good for those of us who did not attend UM to understand more fully how and what different colleges and departments on campus offer and how the colleges work.

**Time and Budget Constraints**

Fourteen the 98 who responded (14.29%) to the survey wrote that lack of time and budgets represent the primary obstacles to their attending professional development training.

**Time**

- I do not really have time in my position to attend professional development offerings, serve on committees, etc. I usually work while I am at work.

- I’ve also signed up for yoga to take during my lunch on Monday, Wednesday, & Friday. I hardly ever get out of here. Usually, I make it out of the office once a week for yoga.

- Help supervisors find a good balance between professional development, committee involvement and getting the work done.

- The lack of ability to attend trainings on campus and have the support of my department is bad for my morale. It makes me not want to work at the University.

- I believe professional development is very important for the University, especially in the IT sector, considering the fast pace of change. I personally need to keep that in mind and make sure that, while we’re all busy, we still need to make time for advancing the quality of our employees.

- If campus asks for training, then they need to attend the training sessions. I work in a department that provides a lot of campus trainings, and we get low turnout for most events. We offer what is needed and requested, and we have adjusted for the time year, day of week, and time of day, often offering multiple sessions. If campus wants training, they have to attend!

- I think professional development at UM is outstanding and clearly an important priority of UM. It’s great UM invests so much into their staff and faculty. I only wish I felt like I could afford to take more time to participate without drowning in a backlog of work upon return!

- I enjoy all of the classes that I have taken, although I would like to take more, but I know that time is always going to be a factor.

**Budget**

- Budgeting for continuing professional education is generally done under the "travel" line and is often the first to go or be frozen or reduced. I think that from a budget perspective that professional development is not supported by UM.

- scholarships/financial assistance

- In terms of current professional development, I guess I would add to my previous answer that I attend scientific conferences when I have money in a specific grant/ agreement; I serve on two committees that involve representatives from other state agencies and organizations in my field, and I have taken classes in the past although being able to afford the fees, even with a tuition waiver can be hard. In addition, the UM policy on taking classes specifically to gain skills/knowledge related to your job is not very clear and has never seemed very conducive, i.e. does not support using work time for classes and class work.
• Access to training opportunities across UM seems to be at the discretion of the supervisor and specifically how they are willing to prioritize money. I feel very lucky that my supervisor has made training a priority, but I don’t feel like the same opportunities are given to other staff outside of his purview in IT.

• It would be nice if there was a pool of money that any staff member could apply for to help out in funding development opportunities. These are hardly ever written into grants.

• I have an extremely limited training budget for my staff. In order to send my staff to training the entire budget can be spent on one person. At that rate, the best my staff can expect is one training program every seven years. This is ridiculously inadequate. The irony of an institution of higher learning that doesn’t provide an adequate budget for training is not lost on its employees.

Alternative Training Times and Methods

Responses in this category indicated that staff would like more training offered during summer and winter session rather than only during the academic year. Comments also touched on additional mentorship opportunities and roundtables, off-campus training, video/live streaming, and more in-depth and incentivized trainings. Put into practice, the ideas presented below could make professional development more flexible, accessible, and relevant. This category made up 13.27% or 13 the total 98 responses.

Summer and winter training

• Please offer more training during the summer and winter.

• I would just like to see more opportunities during the winter and summer months when there is a lot of down time in the office and I can feel comfortable to take a few hours off from the office. I don’t want to feel guilty when leaving my boss alone in the office.

• It would be nice if they were spread out throughout the semesters, not all at once. For example, this Fall Semester there were 3-4 offered within 2 weeks. Everyone is really busy at the beginning of the semester and it is difficult to get away for a few hours once a week or more.

Mentorship

• I really believe that the professional development opportunities are important, but there is one specific drawback. Let’s take the last leadership forum for example. The overall information in that forum was great as it covered the highlights of how to be an effective leader. The problem is it only covers the highlights. To encourage leadership opportunities, it would be helpful to develop a group where they could meet potentially a few times a month. These forums largely lack any real mentorship abilities as they are just “one and done.” To really develop the necessary skills, it is important to get interested people together quite frequently. Until this happens, the professional development forums will be just so-so.

• The professional development workshops have really been excellent, I am eager to see what else is offered. It would be nice to see more round tables between the academic and business administration to share information.

Targeted or off-campus training

• We have a lot of personal growth training, and that’s great. I would rather have an opportunity to receive technical training that is related to my job in order to help me grow as an IT professional.
• We need more professional development for advisors. I’m an advocate of hiring professional advisors in higher education. The value of quality advising is very underrated. NACADA has several ways of bringing quality training for advisors to colleges and universities.

• Staff should be encouraged to make connections off campus. Professional development is not just about opportunities here. A lot of people would learn substantially more from people in their equivalent jobs at other universities than they ever could from professional development sessions at UM.

• I appreciate the IT and HRS workshops that are offered. I would like to have more opportunities, within the state of Montana, the region or beyond, to meet people from other higher ed institutions and network while pursuing professional development that will help me improve my work at UM - but that comes with a price tag, so I want to be very discerning about what sort of opportunity to pursue. At this moment, however, it’s not my #1 priority.

• Professional development is very specific to the needs of the individual, where they are in their career stage, and the demands of their position. Some positions are very dynamic and require at least twice a year opportunities to stay current. UM would benefit from a workforce that is current in its skill set, and benefit from the collaboration and exposure that results from interacting with others outside of the institution.

Training video

• Please provide professional development opportunities via live video streaming or by sending an individual to Hamilton so that Bitterroot College employees can participate. Thank you for this survey!

• They are doing online webinars for wellness subjects, that works better for me than attending workshops, especially if I can turn them off and on and work through them as I have time.

Incentivized training

• The University of Montana has provided some very good opportunities for professional development, but most of them don’t provide the depth needed to take it beyond the workshop. I would like to see professional series type opportunities. Something like Penn State Certificate Programs (http://ohr.psu.edu/learning/certificate-programs/) or other trainings/professional development that provide employees with the opportunity to really focus on a topic. A commitment from the University that could include some type of incentive for people to attend would also be helpful. I know budgets are tight but, some type of recognition beyond a certificate of completion. A lot of people in my department participate in the Limeade wellness program. Maybe a point system could be developed similar to Limeade with a reward after earning a number of points (or attending a number of workshops of value to their department). There is a lot of good stuff out there and it could benefit many, many people on campus.

Administration and Supervisor Support

Ten out of 98 respondents (10.20%) indicated that there is a lack of support for staff professional development from campus administration as well as supervisors. These responses called for unanimous support and encouragement from all levels for staff to engage in professional development because many are either unaware of opportunities or not allowed to attend. Staff would also like to see effective advertisement of funding opportunities and clear policies developed regarding staff participation.

One respondent also asked if there is a website that shows all training opportunities available, and others would like to easy-to-find information on staff scholarship, grants, and tuition waivers all in one place.
I feel that most of the time it is the administrative assistant-level personnel that attend the classes offered and not the supervisors.

It is difficult to provide equitable opportunities among all staff for professional development, but the disparity is wide. When a dean believes in professional development, but a chair does not think a staff member should be away from his/her desk except when the supervisor thinks the training is relevant and beneficial, it creates quite a quandary.

In regard to this topic, I think I would summarize by saying that overall the unit doesn’t discourage it, but it doesn’t necessarily encourage it either.

Support for professional development opportunities needs to come from above. The President, VPs, and Directors of departments. If they do not promote and care about these opportunities, they are doing a disservice to their employees.

There seem to be some opportunities out there, but, unless you know they are out there, you would miss them. The managers should take a more active role in knowing about them and encouraging or telling the staff what is available.

Is there a website where UM staff can see the aggregated and accumulated total of all professional development / training available, and entities to contact? If not, one would be very useful.

Make scholarships and grants more visible to all employees for attending conferences outside of Missoula. Make information about taking classes at UM/reduced tuition/etc. easier to find. Or help people to find the support they need to navigate this process more easily.

In order to assure equal opportunities for participating in such professional development opportunities, it would be helpful for supervisors to be pressured to allow their employees to attend, possibly even making certain courses mandatory or providing some type of department incentive.

Perhaps a more equitable ruling on whether you have to take annual leave to attend similar opportunities and also for Wellness Seminars. We have to take annual leave; however, we hear that other departments do not.

It would be great to have incentives or rewards for departments whose employees acquire the most professional development skills. It would be great to have a program designed to encourage people to take leave for professional development and to encourage supervisors to push employees to acquire professional developments.

Career Advancement

Approximately 6.12%, or 6 out of 98 respondents, addressed their concerns about career advancement at UM.

I feel that I have hit a ceiling as to wear I can grow at UM.

I don’t know if I can develop professionally any further.

I had to laugh about not being considered a supervisor if your employees are students! Who else can we afford to hire? And because we can’t afford anyone else, isn’t a student employee that much more critical to our success? For that reason, isn’t it extremely important that we manage them effectively, instead of “pooh-poohing” the fact that we are dedicating an incredible amount of our effort to training them and relying on them? Also had to laugh about the importance of a “certificate of achievement.” If it could be used in some way to further my “professional development,” then it could be useful. But no one else but me will ever see it!
• The pay increase process where LOA employees are limited to the amount of annual salary increase either set % or fixed $ amount set by policy or the administration is counterproductive in terms of retaining and encouraging employees to work for UM. A highly efficient or productive employee that isn’t compensated for their skills and abilities will find a better paying career move than remain at UM.

• Unless the certificate can result in a promotion/pay increase, I wouldn’t be interested in the certificate.

• Other than personal development and self-esteem, is there anything an internal (on-campus) workshop is useful for? Career advancement, inter-departmental mobility, salary raise, etc.?

• As a non-profit organization whose employees are funded outside of the UM general budget, and whose activities often engage stakeholders off-campus, there needs to be better systems within UM for designating and accommodating these positions. For instance, in hiring highly qualified, competitive applicants, it’s like pulling teeth to get UM to “allow” us to pay them and hire them under an appropriate wage. The hiring funds aren’t even coming from the UM general budget. They’re private, contract, or grant funds. UM should have no opinion on this. Professional development is the least of our worries. It seems that maybe leadership in HR could use some professional development to accommodate these hires.

• With all of the shooting going on around the country I think more first responder/first aid would be an interest.

• Staff should understand that you get out of professional development what you put into it, active participation is key, not just showing up and playing on your phone for an hour.

• With all of the shooting going on around the country I think more first responder/first aid would be an interest.

• 1) I was asked to participate in a committee, then didn’t hear anything. When I inquired, the person who initially asked (someone in the Staff Senate) me to participate informed me that I wasn’t part of the committee. There seems to be a lack of organization in volunteer/committee recruitment. 2) The new WLI is a wonderful opportunity; however, it seems to be geared towards women who already hold leadership positions. More opportunities, such as WLI, for classified staff need to be created.

• Professional development is provided for in an excellent manner, but like I said earlier, I do not believe that staff has sufficient recourse if there are issues with supervisors or management decisions that can affect the way our customers (the students and legislature) our efficiency. Atmosphere and efficiency or the lack thereof can just as easily affect that resulting in our current low enrollments. I believe staff can be the solution instead of always being forced to follow the mandates, to have input and perhaps it can even be done better.
Reference