

# EMPLOYEE UNIVERSITY

In 2013, San Francisco State University’s Employee University (EU) develops an inclusive, holistic, diversified and free learning management program available to all university employees.

EU provides quality training programs available to all employees on a first-come, first-served registration basis. In implementing this policy, EU has resolved a crucial equality issue. Although the CSU system offers a fee waiver program, there are barriers for many employees, including work-life balance, course access in impacted classes, English as a second language, scheduling and cost constraints.

EU’s approach also addresses the perception that the internal and external training approval process was biased toward employees in higher-level positions, who then had more training opportunities made available to them. The prior fee waiver and external training approval process took into consideration various factors, including roles, departmental needs and budget – an individualized approach that in general didn’t leverage economies of scale. For example, approval decisions were only relevant to a single employee. This resulted in a higher training cost per person, both from the actual costs of training for such items as program, travel and lodging, as well as costs for internal resources to research and approve the training on a one-time basis.

EU’s approach is more diversified and offers a broader reach, utilizing economies of scale by leveraging campus resources and providing all employees with equal access to high-quality training opportunities. Such opportunities include taking a class, teaching a class or volunteer service on the EU board. For example, classes range from verbal skills for limited English speakers to advanced leadership courses.

By leveraging the staff, faculty and administration talent across the campus, the EU training programs are cost-effective, diversified and create a synergistic collegial environment in which all campus personnel are invested in achieving success.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS

Threaded throughout the program from inception to implementation are opportunities for learning and skills development, either through taking a class, volunteering to teach a class, or volunteering to serve on the EU board. From the first pilot launch in June 2014 to the campus-wide launch ending September 18, 2015, class attendance has increased by approximately 47 percent. More than 50 employees have volunteered their services by teaching classes or serving on the EU board. Future intended operational performance outcomes include:

1. EU positively impacting promotions for SFSU’s leadership positions. This will be measured by the number of individuals promoted to leadership roles who have either served on the EU board, taken courses through EU, or taught EU courses.

## MILESTONES

Sep  
2015

- Employee University Fall/ Winter 2015-2016 Campus-Wide Registration. EU registration system includes automated enrollment and wait-list confirmations.

Jun  
2015

- Employee University Summer 2015 Campus-Wide Launch. SFSU Strategic Initiative goal is achieved, with the first class – Customer Service Skill-Building, commencing June 25.

Nov  
2014

- Employee University Pilot #2 is launched. Pilot expanded to include A & F, University Advancement, and Student Affairs & Enrollment Management. First class, Campus Mental Health & Well-Being, commences.

Oct  
2014

- Employee University was included in the SFSU Strategic Plan.

Aug  
2014

- First EU Pilot receives a petition from class participants to continue and extend class sessions for the Verbal Skills for Limited English Speakers.

Jun  
2014

- The first EU pilot is launched. First class is Verbal Skills for Limited English Speakers, Level 1.

Apr  
2014

- Employee University is included in the Administration & Finance long range action plan.

## PROJECT TEAM

### PROJECT TEAM – SFSU

**Ron Cortez**  
vice president and cfo,  
Administration & Finance

### PROJECT LEADERSHIP

**Ann Serman**  
**Bryan Kauffman**  
**David Rourke**  
**Praveen Rattan**

Volunteer Committee Members  
**PILOT 1 – SUMMER 2014**

**Betsy Jo Carleton, Caitlin Steele, Catherine Dunham, Frances Barron, Irene Donner, Michael Martin, Nish Malik, Tiffany Mikami, Thomas Kent Iwasubo, Wanda Humphrey**

**PILOT 2 – FALL/WINTER 2014-15**

**Andrew Brosnan, Betsy Jo Carleton, Bonnie Li Victorino, Cristal Wallin, Derek Trang, Elena Stoian, Frances Barron, Irene Doner, Ivonne Mendez, Julie Harrell, Julie Veronica Perez, Osvaldo Del Valle, Shimina Harris, Sri Ramya Bachu Venkata, Victoria Ramos Sponza**

**CAMPUS-WIDE LAUNCH SUMMER 2015**

**Alex Owens, Andrew Brosnan, Betsy Jo Carleton, Bonnie Li Victorino, Chanda Jensen, Cristal Wallin, Derek Trang, Frances Barron, Irene Donner, Ivonne Mendez, Julie Veronica Perez, Kathleen Bruno, Libby Chang, Miranda Mah, Osvaldo Del Valle, Shimina Harris, Tiffany Mikami, Victoria Ramos Sponza**

2. Class participants to demonstrate measureable leadership and training skills through either teaching a course or taking a leadership role in one of the classes. For example, the “train-the-trainer” approach in class offerings will enable future class participants to lead, train and mentor others. Success will be measured by tracking class participants and correlating the data to class leadership roles or future instructors. Furthermore, the success of the instructor or class leadership role will be measured by class participant surveys.

## QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

Employee University has been well-received by faculty, staff and administrators. Based on evaluations from class participants from all three sessions:

1. More than 90 percent of class participants indicate the instructors and courses are effective.
2. More than 93 percent of class participants would recommend the course to a colleague.
3. A few examples of words the class participants have used to describe EU in one word include: amazing, great, educational, excellent, helpful, relevant, positive, fun, interesting, enlightened, timely and worthwhile.

Further statistical evidence regarding program success, from June 2014-September 2015:

1. Employee attendance is over 100 per sessions, with a combined attendance total of approximately 400.
2. EU class participant attendance has increased by approximately 47 percent from the first pilot launch in June 2014 to the campus-wide launch ending September 18, 2015.
3. Over 50 employees have volunteered their services by teaching a class or serving on the EU board.

## IMPACT AND BENEFIT

EU consciously partners with key university initiatives and programs that directly identify and develop key talent, in addition to leadership and succession planning opportunities.

Following are some examples of the program’s reach and impact:

- EU board members have self-reported feeling more confident, creative and visible by volunteering for different positions within Employee University, leading meetings and presenting different aspects of this program at various venues.
- Co-chairs have had the opportunity to present a two-year budget plan and attend the vice president’s monthly Long Range Action Plan meetings.
- Class participants report the classes have provided them with learning and networking opportunities, including the chance to meet leaders from across the campus.
- The Verbal Skills for Limited English Speakers class participants demonstrated their enthusiasm, support and appreciation for this program by signing a petition to continue the class and to request the class time be increased by 30 minutes.
- Volunteer instructors and administrators appreciate EU, as it provides a learning platform to communicate campus-wide key messages such as leadership, advocacy and customer service.

## LESSONS LEARNED

From the onset of the program:

- 1 EU must receive executive-level support from inception to implementation and continue to receive this level of support. Both help immensely to advance the program.
- 2 Form and develop a board of division-wide employees to be custodians of the initiative. Release time should be granted to those who work in the program.
- 3 Marketing, promotions and communication are keys to the program's success. Utilize as many venues, such as town halls, department meetings and campus memos as applicable. In addition, all communication should include language that clearly indicates who the program is meant for, such as faculty and staff employees. This helps to ensure the message is received by the targeted audience and reduces confusion among individuals such as students to whom the program does not apply.
- 4 Determine key program parameters, such as first-come, first served, to ensure the program aligns with its strategic intended outcomes.
- 5 Automate registration and survey processes. Current methods of evaluation assess Level 1 learning through participant surveys, which are manual. As the program expands, to fully realize the total benefits of EU, these will need to be measured against industry benchmarks at all levels of training evaluation, 1-4.
- 6 Embed EU volunteer succession plans to ensure continued momentum, drive and commitment to meet short-term and long-term deliverables.