



MAXIMIZING SHARED EXPERIENCE & INTELLECT TO IMPROVE WORKERS COMPENSATION CLAIMS KNOWLEDGE

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

The University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) handle thousands of workers' compensation claims, paying millions in benefits on an annual basis. Recognizing our shared challenges and experience, both universities are teaming up to share knowledge, good practices, challenges and training in order to better serve out claimants and organizations.

Beginning with discussions related to the potential of sharing like kind and quality data, applicable stakeholders for both organization's risk management operations recognized there was a greater opportunity in not only considering data, but incorporating the aforementioned shared knowledge, good practices, challenges and training to improve our respective workers' compensation programs.

A potential historical barrier was that previous risk management stakeholders at both organizations perhaps had not recognized the value in collaboration with the other California higher education institution, and/or perhaps had a personal belief with a dash of cynicism when it came to the UC or CSU. However, with organizational change, comes new stakeholders with their own ideas and values. As such, the time was right for considering such a shared endeavor.

This endeavor also benefited from a simple alignment as both the UC and CSU contract with the same third party administrator (TPA) for their workers' compensation claims administration.

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

Over the course of several teleconferences between the risk management stakeholders, the TPA and other resources, the holistic structure of the collaboration took hold.

The structure was two-fold. First, we wanted to get as many of the claims examiners and managers from the TPA to attend a brainstorming/think tank workshop that would entail elements of training, discussion and problem solving. The following are some core bullet points as to what we aimed to accomplish or share:

Allow each university's risk management stakeholder the opportunity to briefly share their vision of workers' compensation, demonstrate an appreciation for the work done by the examiners with an emphasis on their acutely important role in these very large programs.

In deference to the above we wanted to know, what is working and why? What could be improved and why as well as what can be done? Suggestions?

Provide enhanced training on areas of claims handling we saw as key elements to a successful program, such as:

- Drafting of timely and effective Settlement Authority Requests.
- Communication with your campus contacts, i.e. investigation strategies, return to work opportunities, etc.

Desk and time management. What are some effective "tips and tricks" for tackling the myriad of tasks experienced on an active workers' compensation claims desk. Further, what is their "day in the life" of claim examiner and what can be done to improve this experience?

Geographic breakouts to discuss Workers' Compensation Appeals Board nuances, clinical practitioners and other geographic challenges...as it turns out there are large variances in culture and practices from Northern California to Southern California, inland to coastal and urban to rural.

Open forum discussion and feedback.

On August 27, 2015, approximately 25 claims examiners and supervisors met at the UC Office of the President for this day long endeavor. Kevin Confetti, deputy chief risk officer of UC and Zachary Gifford, director of systemwide risk management for the CSU represented the university Risk Management departments.

The initial feedback from the claims examiners was overwhelmingly positive. The core takeaway was really as simple of the claims examiners feeling valued, and as partners in this multimillion dollar endeavor, that the UC and CSU enjoy in handling workers' compensation claims.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS

The second phase of this shared endeavor is to co-host a day-and-a-half to two-day UC and CSU collaborative workers' compensation symposium. Here campus workers' compensation, environmental health & safety, human resources and risk management professionals will receive training and have an opportunity to further consider, develop and implement their own collaborative and innovative ideas on a campus basis.

The UC has graciously offered to maximize use of their robust Conference Planning department to assist in preparing for and executing this symposium, which we are hopeful can take place in the winter/early Spring of 2016. Further, through Mr. Gifford's advocacy, the CSU's risk financing vehicle, the California State University Risk Management Authority (CSURMA) has agreed to contribute \$30,000 toward this symposium.

While the claims examiners were participating in their workshop, UC and CSU personnel met and began penciling out session ideas, speakers and scheduling.

IMPACT AND BENEFIT

Assuming the collaborative workers' compensation symposium is well received and the value recognized, it is the belief of Mr. Confetti and Mr. Gifford we will be able to build on such a positive collaborative effort to pencil out future shared endeavors. There is a massive amount of intellectual resources with both university systems and the belief is that folks on a systems-wide basis will recognize and maximize this era of collaboration to better enhance campus workers' compensation programs.

This collaborative process is in its infancy, thus at this point in time there is not a "measurable" way to gauge its impact. However, "measurable" and logic are not mutually exclusive. The reasonably prudent professional can easily conclude these types of endeavors can only assist, improve and further the programs that such efforts are focused on.