

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM AT DRURY UNIVERSITY

Introduction and Background

The Staff Advisory Council recommended the implementation of a New Employee Peer Support System. The system is an informal program designed to make new staff members feel welcome and included in the Drury community. The program will give the new staff member a contact aside from his or her supervisor/department and will be designed to help the staff member become acclimated to working at Drury. The program will generally last for about the first 60-90 days of employment.

Peer Support Objectives

Prior to the new staff member's first day, the Peer Host and the staff member's supervisor should discuss the new staff member's availability for a first meeting. The host will have three specific concrete objectives: 1) take the new person out to a meal to the Commons or Community Lunch during the first week of employment (CX if the employee starts in the summer), 2) check in with them to see how they are settling in during the second week, and 3) ensure the attendance of the new staff member at the first three staff meetings held after the staff member's start date.

Some of the more subjective goals of the program, as modeled by other existing programs include:

- Providing as much clear and concise information as possible to help the new staff members feel comfortable in their work environment.
- Being a resource on work rules, workplace culture and norms, and unwritten policies and procedures.
- Helping socialize the new staff member with peers, joining them for lunch, etc.
- Identifying resources in the workplace.
- Being available to answer questions
- Reporting any serious issues/concerns to HR or manager/supervisor
- Referring the new staff member to appropriate resources
- Instilling a sense of belonging

Process

- All new staff members will be made aware of the Peer Support Program during Human Resources' new employee orientation session. All new staff members will be assigned to a Peer Host. However, the level of involvement is up to the new staff member and host. The new staff member will fill out an interest form to determine whether he or she is interested activities beyond the concrete objectives.
- A Human Resources representative will assign a Peer Host from a pool of approved employees.
- The Peer Host will then make contact with the new staff member to begin the Peer-Host relationship.
- Pending approval, Human Resources and Staff Advisory Council will split the cost for a lunch at the Commons, Community Lunch, or CX for the new staff member and the peer host during the first week of employment.

Guidelines of the Peer Support Program

- The host will welcome the new staff member, respond to any questions that have arisen, and set a time for their first meeting (within the first week of employment).
- Based upon the needs of the new staff member, the host may provide a brief campus tour, introduction to other members of the Drury University community outside of their own department, and assist with becoming familiar with Drury University activities and department events, etc.
- The host and new person should have weekly contact for the first month of employment.
- Tuesday morning "Coffee on the Side" is a great way to touch base and introduce the employee to other individuals on campus.
- The host and new person may wish to attend Drury University events such as athletic events, plays, concerts, lectures, or other activities offered on campus.
- If the new staff member is not experiencing a positive relationship, they have the option of contacting Human Resources to request assignment of a new peer host.
- The host is to make Human Resources aware of any negative experiences or issues that the new employee may have encountered and communicated to them.
- The peer host will accompany the new staff member to the first three staff meetings occurring after the employee begins work.

Participation in the Drury University Peer Support Program

Qualifications for to become a Peer Host include:

- At least two years of employment at Drury University
- Familiarity with the policies and programs available at Drury
- Must convey a positive image of Drury
- Must not be the new staff member's supervisor and not employed in the same department
- Submission of an interest form, including supervisor's signature
- Participation in a Peer Host training session provided by Human Resources
- Commitment to a three month hosting relationship
- Availability to the new staff member by telephone, e-mail, and in person

Program Evaluation

Human Resources will track information regarding participation in the program. This will enable Human Resources to determine whether the program has a positive affect on employee retention. New staff members and hosts will be asked to complete evaluations forms to provide feedback. Activities that have promoted successful peer relationships will be referenced in future orientations.