

Update from Business Services' EID Team – August 2015

The Business Services' 2015 EID Plan recently was formalized and submitted to VCFA leadership. In short, it has left the creation stage and is now entering its operational life as a guiding strategy for the way we go about business. The updated plan is truly the result of a division-wide effort in that it incorporates input and feedback from a variety of sources, including themes heard in the division's various EID focus groups hosted during the month of May. This approach reflects the fact that EID actions are more meaningful when they are part of a community-driven process. EID "success" is not an end-state—a defined status that is achieved or a performance-driven trophy that is won at some point. Instead, it is part of our everyday business, a continuing endeavor that is never truly completed. EID also is not an alternative managerial method or a trend that will at some point leave the university's stage. It is in fact here to stay and is increasingly the *only way* to do business and succeed in today's dynamic world.

There are several "key actions" identified in the Plan, but two, "communications" and "celebrating differences," are significant themes that were echoed across several forums:

"Communications." Strengthened communications emerged as a common denominator at every turn as the division's EID committee sought input. We heard the division say that hearing and understanding more about the entire division's direction and undertakings would help create a stronger, more engaged atmosphere. Employees, supervisors and senior leaders overwhelmingly noted that increased attention to communicating achievements, issues and opportunities would go a long way to developing and reinforcing individual feelings of engagement and inclusion. Often, under the harried pace of the daily schedule, communicating with one another becomes an after-thought that is more of a luxury than a priority. But in fact, it is a practice and skill-set that is a significant cornerstone of a strong organization.

Communication is more than just efficiently sharing information. In the EID arena, communicating gives everyone an opportunity to be heard and hopefully included in the organization's initiatives and efforts—simultaneously gaining the advantage of the very best ideas while offering all a genuine stake in the division's mission that goes beyond a transactional conduct of their specific job.

"Celebrating Differences." Additionally, the updated 2015 EID Plan emphasizes our deliberate address of EID-related subjects in the workplace, giving division employees, supervisors and leaders a chance to really pause and consider the value of our diverse differences. This pause includes efforts to encourage and support those who wish to participate in training events, seminars and other relevant learning activities across the university and even in the broader community. In this manner, we want the division's employees at all levels to broaden their understanding of one another as well as the diverse community in which we work.

At first glance, a skeptic might see the time spent celebrating differences as a short-term "time-sink" that detracts from our effectiveness in the workplace. But the division's leaders feel

differently. They believe that the personal investment to enrich our understanding of EID-related opportunities and issues will pay dividends in the longer term. It will help Bus Svc become a better place to work and just as importantly, a better partner on campus.

The updated 2015 EID Plan calls on the division to integrate EID-related actions and initiatives into each and every undertaking—marking our culture as one that is increasingly *engaged, inclusive and dedicated to the overwhelming value of diversity*. But this promising goal cannot be achieved by an appointed committee working alone, and it cannot be addressed only by leadership or by a few engaged employees and their supervisors. Turning these ideals into actions is a difficult and pervasive endeavor—one that does not have easy answers or a written script to follow. The Bus Svc 2015 EID Plan is really a call to work—if it is going to amount to anything more than simply 16-pages of nice shelf-liner, it requires the participation and support from each and every member of the division.