

COMPREHENSIVE AND DOCTORAL INSTITUTIONS

Colorful Leadership Tool Promotes Positive Interactions

With a large and diverse student affairs staff of 490 professional employees and another 400 student workers, leaders at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) decided that communication and interaction in the division could be improved. In early 2009, the vice president for student affairs made the decision to adopt the True Colors personality identification model, which has proven to be a highly effective tool for building our foundation for excellence in service and programming.

One example of the system's power is further developing the partnership we developed with the business affairs office to form a unique and highly effective contract community, which expedites contract review and approval for student affairs contracts.

Personality Styles

The student affairs division supports four core principles as ways to be highly effective and successful: (1) communicate for success; (2) connect with students, faculty, staff, and others; (3) collaborate with others across campus; and (4) create opportunities and solutions. The color system underscores these values by identifying the personality style of each staff member; assigning the style

a particular color (blue, gold, green, or orange); and applying concepts of personality theory to foster healthy, productive relationships.

All staff in the division of student affairs attend training on the color system conducted by certified facilitators in the division. New employees in student affairs participate in this training shortly after their first day of employment. The training not only helps staff identify and understand their own characteristics (as well as their color spectrum) but also enables staff to learn how to interact with others.

Four colors represent the individual's spectrum, with one of the colors (characteristics) being dominant. Through this tool, staff can interact with mutual respect and a common understanding that helps foster effective communication and exchanges. For example, my dominant color is orange, which represents creativity, playfulness, quick decisions, energy, and fun. The color system helps me understand how to adapt my communication style when I interact with someone whose dominant color is green (calm, composed, scientific), or even another orange.

Compatible Counterparts

We coupled the personality characteristics tool with our core principles and then



Opened in April 1998, the 63,000-square-foot Biosciences Building at the UTSA main campus houses neuroscience research.

identified potential activities that might benefit from their application. One area we decided to focus on was contracts for products and services and ways we could streamline the process. Business affairs established a community of contract experts from each division. These experts manage the contract processes for their respective divisions of the university. This enabled an exceptional partnership between business affairs, student affairs, and other divisions. The contract experts share information about contract processes with staff in their divisions, improving communication and effectiveness.

The business staff in student affairs created a process consistent with the overarching division goals of:

- Communicating early about the desired action (reason for the contract).
- Connecting with the right people, to evaluate contract terms and facilitate the administrative process.
- Collaborating for successful resolution to obstacles.
- Creating the correct routing paths and forms that promote efficiency.

Having a solid plan of action and clear communication avenues early in the process enables success and helps minimize issues if a contract cannot be approved. In the latter case, student affairs advocates on behalf of the sponsoring department to find alternatives to minimize the impact on students or other constituents.

We've found that this arrangement not only cultivates increased collaboration throughout the entire contract process, but it has created important ties between our division and others on campus. ■



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BUSINESS OFFICER

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The 2011 NACUBO-Commonfund Endowment Study held some good news: FY11 average returns were up 19 percent. But, market volatility could pull lofty outcomes back to earth.