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Dietrich School taking staff career growth seriously

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By **MARTY LEVINE**

New ways to keep staff better connected to Pitt, and to each other, are under way at the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences.

The school also has begun a pilot program to recruit local people for on-the-job training when their resumes may not yet include the requisite education or experience.



Michele Montag

The effort is an expansion of the professional development series begun two years ago with the support of Dean Kathleen Blee, says Michele Montag, executive director for staff personnel and senior assistant dean at the Dietrich School. It aims to promote career growth for staff members, with such offerings as training on University systems and on diversity and inclusion; sessions on how to build resumes and prepare for interviews; and instruction for supervisors on how to support staff in their career growth.

The four half-day diversity and inclusion sessions, says Montag, were developed by Maureen Lazar, director of workforce effectiveness in the Dietrich School. "It's become an incredible way for people who wouldn't usually interact with each other ... to have deep and meaningful conversations with each other" and "think about how to stand up for themselves, how to stand up

for others."

Twenty Pitt staff members who attended these sessions are in a new year-long pilot program called Connected, which pairs them up with the aim of mentoring each other. They will learn to tell their stories, says Montag — where they want their career to go, what

they are passionate about — and spend the ensuing months helping each other toward their goals. The program will also connect people across disparate parts of the Dietrich School, Montag says. The entire group is meeting quarterly to discuss their progress toward personal and professional goals.

The school also has formed an engagement committee, since the school is “really trying to make this a place where people want to come to work,” says Montag — where “they know their colleagues and have the kind of personal engagements that make them want to stay here. How do we make the whole of being here better?”

Anyone on staff can take part in the engagement committee, which has had several initial public meetings to brainstorm ideas, and started a LinkedIn group, Dietrich School Staff Community, which will post their next meeting dates, events and other updates. Recent committee events include a cookie baking competition and a family evening at Pitt’s Allegheny Observatory.

The new staff fellows program was developed as a way to recruit people to work here who don’t yet have the background to earn an entry-level job. It places fellows in a nine-month paid position, during which they rotate through several different jobs. Not only do they gain valuable experience in data entry or as an administrative assistant, Montag explains, but they are matched with a Pitt mentor who helps them work on their resume and connect to others across the University.

Potential staff fellows are being sought through Pitt’s community engagement centers in Homewood and the Hill District and elsewhere.

“The goal is to bring someone in, give them training at the University over a limited amount of time” and prepare them to be a new University employee — in the Dietrich school or elsewhere at Pitt, Montag says. Thus far, one fellow has gained a full-time Pitt job from the experience and another is in the initial training and experience phase.

“It’s been really wonderful to have all of this as a priority of the dean,” she adds.

More information on these new staff development programs can be found at the Dietrich School’s staff page.

Marty Levine is a staff writer for the University Times. Reach him at martyl@pitt.edu or 412-758-4859.

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Craig Hall, fourth floor
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