

Promote Sac State Staff Initiative

Training Needs Focus Group Methodology and Outcomes Report, 2025

Purpose

The “Promote Sac State Staff” initiative [Presidential [Strategic Action Item](#), Workgroup #14] was established to better understand how Sacramento State can support employee career development, internal mobility, and long-term retention. During Summer 2024, Learning & Development conducted focus groups with staff and managers to gather qualitative feedback about career development, professional development, skill gaps, and leadership needs. The information collected was used to guide the development of course content, new programs, resources, and tools.

Methodology

Learning & Development used facilitated focus groups to gather input from both staff and managers. The same facilitator-led discussion format was used for each audience, allowing participants to answer structured questions while also sharing additional experiences and recommendations.

Staff Focus Groups	Manager Focus Groups
• 13 sessions conducted July 22–August 9, 2024 • 80 participants randomly selected from employees with more than two years of service. • One-hour facilitated discussions.	• 8 sessions conducted during July–August 2024. • 37 managers representing divisions across campus. • One-hour facilitated discussions.

Focus Group Questions

Questions Asked of Staff

- What training on processes and technology do you need to do your job well?
- What barriers prevent you from participating in training?
- What does career development, professional development, and staff educational goals mean to you?
- What are your professional, career, and educational goals?
- What professional development opportunities would you most value?
- What is a career advancement pathway?
- What outcome from this initiative would have the greatest impact on your career?

Questions Asked of Managers

- What skills and competencies are essential for staff success?
- What are the biggest performance or skill gaps among staff?
- How should Learning & Development support the Promote Sac State Staff initiative?
- What emerging trends require additional staff training?
- What training methods produce the greatest transfer of learning?
- What would make current employees more competitive for internal positions?
- What professional development would strengthen your effectiveness as a leader?

How the Data Informed Action

Feedback from both groups was reviewed for recurring themes and used to prioritize Learning & Development initiatives.

What We Heard	Action Taken
Staff wanted clearer career planning resources that could result in career growth.	Created a Career Development website, Career Development Plan, Career Development event programming, and a Manager Toolkit for career conversations.
Managers identified core competencies needed for staff success.	Developed the Key Skills Course Catalog and Skill Pathways aligned to manager-identified competencies for staff.
Managers requested stronger leadership development.	Launched Hive6 Leadership: Pillars of Success sessions and Hornet Leader Huddles to strengthen leadership capability.
Increase the visibility and accessibility of career development resources.	Redesigned the Learning & Development website with improved navigation and learner-centered organization.

The findings were also considered alongside training participation trends, Human Resources observations, and recurring workforce development needs.

Conclusion

The focus groups demonstrated that employees value structured career development and multiple pathways for growth. A key finding was that many staff members seek advancement as individual contributors rather than to formal management positions. This reinforced the importance of providing development opportunities that support both technical expertise and leadership aspirations.

By combining participant feedback with institutional data and Human Resources experience, Learning & Development created targeted resources, competency-based learning, expanded leadership programs, and improved online tools that directly respond to employee and manager needs while supporting Sacramento State's goal of becoming an employer of choice.