OVERVIEW

In late March and early April of 2006, focus groups were held to provide input into the feasibility, training needs, and structure of a venue designed to assist campus individuals with learning about fiscal implications of management. This venue is to be called the University Business Institute.

Responses were recorded in a SurveyMonkey.com questionnaire as well as data captured from group input to facilitated questions.

This report is intended to summarize trends and cite observations in the focus groups’ responses and provide the basis for discussion of the UBI’s design and implementation.
Question 1 – On a scale of “No Understanding to “Complete Understanding,” how comfortable do you feel with each topic?

The five areas that scored lowest (and therefore participants had less understanding) were:

- Risk Management and University Insurance Programs (2.32)
- Fiscal and Operational Impacts of Collective Bargaining Agreements (2.34)
- Audits and the Control Environment (2.38)
- Troubleshooting Fiscal Issues (2.44)
- Leaves (2.47)

The lowest-scoring five areas align with the data which cites high combined percentages of “No Understanding” and “Minimal Understanding.” The percentages are: 61%, 54%, 55%, 49%, and 46% respectively.

However, moving down the list this alignment does not continue. For example, Interpretation and application of CSUF policies and regulations received a response average of 2.77 indicating a rather sound understanding of the topic. On the same topic, 32% indicated No to Minimal Understanding. Budget and Expense Management with a response average of 2.78, but 35% indicated No to Minimal Understanding. Data could indicate that there is a wider gap of understanding of Budget and Expense Management; more focus group participants either selected Complete Understanding or Minimal Understanding versus Some Understanding.
Question 2 – What are your TOP FIVE fiscal training needs?

While respondents indicated varying levels of understanding in Question 1, Question 2 elicited participant needs. The top five perceived fiscal training needs are:

- **Financial Reporting and Reconciliation** (47.3%)
- **Budget and Expense Management** (46.2%)
- **Interpretation and application of CSUF policies and regulations** (45.1%)
- **CSU and University Budget Process** (42.9%)
- **Budget, Benefits, and Salary Forecasting** (38.5% *tie*)
- **Interpretation and application of state and CSU policies and regulations** (38.5% *tie*)

One conclusion we may infer is that while participants have less understanding of other topics, they desire more training on topics with which they already have some understanding.
Question 3 – Describe any other topics that could be included in the UBI.

Across the focus groups, the data clearly show the participants’ first perceived need, Administration & Finance Process training. This was also evident in each focus group’s data taken independently.

On average across the focus groups, General Resources and HR topics vie for second. Depending on the focus group, these topics “seesawed” between second and third perceived need.

On average across the focus groups, Leadership Institute topics and Soft Skills training round out the top five perceived training needs respectively. Leadership Institute-style topics were clearly fourth in perceived need in most of the focus groups. However, Leadership Institute equaled the perceived needs of General Resources and HR in one focus group. Soft Skills, such as team building and customer service, clearly ranked fifth in perceived need.
**Question 4 – How do you learn best?**

Overwhelmingly, participants preferred **Instructor Led – Internal Experts** (61%) almost twice as much as **Instructor Led – External Experts** (32%) followed closely by **Other Self-Paced** (30%).

One might infer that a pool of internal experts needs to be identified and provided the skills and tools to execute such training, assuming they have time to develop and deliver workshops. Provisions for coverage of experts’ workload should be considered – indirect costs. Should external experts be used, direct costs may be incurred as vendor-consultants generally charge a fee.
Question 5 – What ongoing resources should the University Business Institute provide?

Overwhelmingly, a Whom to Contact list was the resource (95.7%). Taken a step further, one respondent clarified and requested “Expert to Contact” list of some type since, unfortunately, sometimes the “Whom” and “Expert” may be two different people.

Quick Reference Guides followed next with a 90.2% preference. Web Pages (82.6%), Online Forms Directory (75.0%), and Online Tutorials (69.6%) rounded out the top five.

It is interesting to note that while participants clearly indicated a desire to learn from instructors (Question 4), the preferred resources for ongoing support are – or can be – electronic resources.
Question 6 – How much time would you be able to devote to University Business Institute learning?

Another resounding response was > 5 times per year, < 4 hours [each event]. Over 82% of the respondents preferred this timing format. Approximately 66% indicated 3 – 5 times per year, < 4 hours [each event]. Interestingly, 46% of the respondents could devote 1 – 2 times per year, 2 days [each event].

It appears that the highest participation may come with shorter events, those less than four hours each.
Question 7 - Do you anticipate any obstacles to your attendance at the Institute?

Question 8 - What would the obstacle(s) be?

Approximately 64% of the participants indicated that there would be obstacles to attending, and 39% said it would be lack of available time. Another 22% indicated a related issue, conflicts with other priorities.

Office or position coverage was also a concern, being cited by approximately 18% of the participants.
Question 9 - *Would you be interested in going through the UBI in a cohort group or with different group members each session?*

There was no clear direction; 48.4% desired a cohort group and 51.6 indicated a preference for different participating members at each workshop.
Question 10 – In which division do you work?

Administration & Finance comprised 44.9% of the participants followed by Academic Affairs with 39.8%. Representation from all other divisions ranged from 1.0% to 6.1%.

This representation is appropriate if most of the target audience for the UBI resides in Administration & Finance and Academic Affairs.
Question 11 – Which of the following best describes your current role?

Financial Services Department staff represented 26.4% of the participants. While Department Financial/HR Staff was selected by 16.5% of the participants, several of the respondents selected Other and self-identified as Department Financial/HR Staff. This would effectively increase the 16.5% to approximately 20%.
Question 12 – How long have you been in your current position?

Most respondents have been in their current positions for five years or less, with 28.6% indicating 0 – 2 years and 29.6% indicating 3 – 5 years for a total of 58.2%. An additional 26.5% have been here 5 – 10 years, totalling 8.7% being in their current position less than 10 years.
**Question 13 – Please provide any additional comments.**

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<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
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| Institute “Idea”          | • Great/valuable idea  
• Moving in right direction  
• Great opportunity  
• Worthwhile project  
• “When do we start?” |
| Management Support        | • “Senior campus leadership MUST support the Institute”  
• Needed for success  
• “The only thing I worry about is management buying into this.”  
• Most importantly from supervisors and management |
| Time Requirements         | • Large time commitment  
• Employees enroll but do not complete or cancel class – do not have the time  
• New employees should have coverage and/or allowed time to attend classes  
• “The University’s scarcest resource is management and staff time.”  
• Challenge to focus on this in the midst of regular demands |
| Format                   | • Workshop/presentations  
• In-class/instructor  
• Online training sessions/online tutorial  
• Audio/visual |
| Courses Offered           | • Address issues of accountability  
• Campus business practices/provide overview of financial aspects  
• Learn through comprehensive program, not piecemeal  
• “Need to track courses and have choices.”  
• HR and financial overlap, need to balance training |
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| Training Schedule | • 1-2 hours, less than 4 hrs  
• Short learning periods  
• Lump same type of courses on same days  
• Nights/weekends  
• “… recommend that the sessions or classes be 2-3 hrs long and schedule times be flexible …” |
| Audience          | • All levels  
• Persons responsible for budget mgmt/staff interested in campus fiscal admin  
• Staff/managers  
• New employees/new managers  
• “… targeted those who have at least 2 years experience in the system” |
| Communication     | • “Keep communications open and available for all new changes …”  
• Would like HR, Purchasing, AP to return calls or pick up phones  
• Provide up to date documentation on how to do things/who handles what  
• Inadequate amount of training and/or information to complete budgetary/admin tasks  
• Have clear policies, procedures, goals/ have one webpage identifying recent changes in all areas |
| Other             | • Combine LI and UBI goals, LI has already covered some topics (ethics)  
• Should be certificate program to encourage participation  
• Staff with initiative get technical knowledge to perform duties through existing training courses  
• “… management needs to create better mentor system for staff and managers within division …”  
• Missing relevance to HR analysts; seems budget specific  
• Success measures to rate UBI?  
• Successful if funded and marketed properly  
• Possibly consider other name than “Institute,” convey this is continuous learning opportunity  
• How funded? Interdivisional?  
• Include VP’s as learners and teachers |
TRENDS AND OBSERVATIONS BY FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS

The following is a summary of the comments from the UBI focus group meetings. This summary only addresses the comments related to the structure and content of the training program. Although some comments were made more than once, each different subject is only included once. Comments about financial processes and general comments about the campus were not included and should be reviewed separately by the appropriate parties.

Recommended Training Subjects

- GAAP accounting
- Taxes
- Basic accounting – general ledger, chart of accounts, etc.
- Periodic updates on regulations
- Policy training/orientation for new employees
- Title 5
- Insurance programs
- CMS
- Portal tabs
- Roles of the divisions
- Expectations of roles at each level
- Relationships between units
- How units interact
- Career preparation
- Communications
- Personal skills assessment
- Becoming a Manager/Supervisor
- Teambuilding
- Participative Management
- Change Management process
- Decision-making for managers
• Document management
• Using computers to complete processes
• Purchase order process
• Whom to contact
• Documentation requirements
• BRIO
• Physical Plant - work orders
• Leaves
• Succession planning
• Customer Service/Students as customers
• Reporting faculty time off
• Managers role in training
• How do campus & CSU policies relate
• Financial training for executive positions
• Running conferences
• Working with HR
• Fiscal aspects of IT
• Position management
• Directive 11
• P-Cards
• Benefit costing
• FAMIS
• Refresher math
• FRS
• Big picture/how pieces fit together
• Budget reporting and tracking
• Networking
• Basic bookkeeping
• Employment separations
• Proper use of sub-codes
• Recharge documentation
• Business writing
• Risk Management
• Resources in Physical Plant
• Payroll and attendance
• Working with faculty
• Classification/Compensation issues
• Expectation of working on campus
• Leadership training for staff
• Classification system
• HR processes/hiring
• How to determine who has access/responsibility
• Foundation procedures
• Procurement process
• Vendor identification
• How do you get the information you need
• Difference in union contracts
• New Chair training
• What questions should you ask
• Expectations of different roles/levels
• Overview of organization
• Attendance guidelines
• Basic business process

Options for Presenting Training
• Mini-certificate programs
• Clear difference between UBI and other campus classes
• Training by in-house experts
• Train whole group together
• College credit for courses
• Cumulative value for taking multiple courses
• On-line learning options
• Hands-on experience
• Orientation for new employees at all levels
• On-line tutorials
• On-line resources
• On-the-job training
• Buddy from other areas/peer mentors
• Safe, interactive forum
• Department-specific training for different groups
• Combined online and class sessions
• CD-based classes/Library of classes
• Mixed classes - management and staff
• Divide by skill level
• Follow-up after sessions
• Technical training
• Intranet resources
• Situation-specific training
• Teambuilding sessions
• Modular by subject or area
• Cafeteria approach
• Night classes
• Off-campus classes
• CTO for night/weekend classes
• Organize courses by function
• Case studies
• One-on-one mentoring
• Conference-type programs
• Training for academics before assuming administrative duties
• Train managers to train their staff
- PAB participation as trainers
- Mix faculty and staff in sessions
- Describe content of courses clearly in advance
- Labs
- Cross training between functions
- Involvement should be mandatory
- Courses should be on clear “paths”
- Gear training to levels of skills
- Retreat format
- Hands on problem-solving
- Case analysis
- Reading/books
- Audio CD/Book on tape
- Facilitated sessions rather than lecture
- Match size of group to subject/format
- Fast track training for new employees
- Mentoring
- Coordinate with existing programs
- Peer discussion/Sharing ideas and information
- Interactive/Team learning between units
- General overview during New Employee Orientation
- Portal Community Group
- Blackboard’s Community system
- Distribute materials before classes for review/preparation
- Use team exercises to promote cooperation
- Do follow-up/refresher training
- Vary length of classes based on topics
- More detailed classes than what is offered through ETD
Recommended Structure for Training

- 4-Hour courses
- Schedule around campus events
- 2-day off site/conference format
- One hour at a time would be easier
- 1-day training with lunch
- Vary length of program based on subject/staff level
- Be aware of low staffing periods
- 2-hour classes Ok
- Short-term classes
- Lecture and hands-on
- Table top exercises
- Role playing
- 3-hour sessions are too demanding
- On-line cohort group
- Options for people with different schedules
- Internal subject matter experts
- Provide assistance with forms/processes after classes
- Vary locations/Expose people to campus
- Regular schedule of classes
- Use smart classrooms
- 3 or 4 days Ok if supported
- Saturdays Ok with overtime

Recommended Resources

- Decision-making resources
- Quick reference guide
- Contact list
- All forms in one location
- Data available in one location
• Indexes
• Web resources
• Searchable database
• Direct notification from process owners
• List serve
• Documentation binders
• “Inside” telephone number for offices
• Reference manual with samples
• Orientation checklist by role
• Calendar of actions
• Funding sources and usages
• FAQ on web pages
• Organization charts
• Process maps
• Access to reporting tools
• Step-by-step directions

Potential Benefits
• Better qualified, more efficient employees
• Better understanding
• Makes job easier
• Improved communication between units/divisions
• Better work environment
• Knowledge sharing
• Reduced turnover
• Fewer mistakes
• Better customer service
• Frees up management time
• Cross training/back up
• Cheaper than outside training
• Certificate can support promotion/in-range progression
• Better communication between offices
• Tangible support from Vice President’s office
• Positive return on investment
• Better access to information

Concerns
• Consistency of training
• Train staff before changing procedures
• Management support/Ability to attend
• Professional trainers/Quality sessions
• Active involvement of middle managers
• Clarification of responsibilities at different levels
• Mandatory for some positions
• Lack of clear procedures on campus
• Transition of training to results
• Avoid calling it a training program
• Avoid calling it an “Institute”
• Staffing support during participation in courses
• Need better reporting formats
• Understand user needs before developing courses
• Consistent access/consistent data for reports
• Do skill training first, then open for advancement
• Need support/buy-in from management
• Do training by function
• Consider amount of time commitment
• Need access to processes and time to practice
• Find out what has already been done and incorporate into program
• Should not have to maintain a shadow system in order to operate
• Need an “ombudsman” for financial processes
- Staff should be encouraged to take courses at appropriate levels
- Hard to let person out of the office for more than one hour
- Identify measures for success