

**WALLA WALLA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
EMPLOYEE AFFINITY GROUPS
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 5130**

I. POLICY BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

At Walla Walla Community College (WWCC), Employee Affinity Groups support the shared mission, vision and values of the College, as well as the goals and objectives described in the Strategic Plan. Employee Affinity Groups play a vital role in developing and improving employee morale and campus climate. WWCC recognizes that Employee Affinity Groups foster employee development, contribute to the College's commitment to diversity and inclusion efforts, and allow for networking, mentorships and other opportunities for professional and personal development. In addition, they strengthen networking and cohesiveness across the college and promote career development.

Employee Affinity Groups are an important resource to the College in other ways, as well. They provide important feedback to management and assist with efforts to attract and retain highly qualified candidates for employment at WWCC. The Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (OEDI) supports these groups in promoting a sense of belonging and providing a sense of community for our employees.

II. AUTHORITY

Board Policy 1370.

III. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all WWCC employees.

IV. DEFINITIONS

A. Employee Affinity Groups are voluntary associations of employees who gather together around a common interest.

V. POLICY

A. Formation & Organization - Employee Affinity Groups are welcomed and supported by the College. Their meetings and other efforts positively affect the work environment and contribute to College core values and strategic planning goals, including helping to recruit and retain a high quality, highly skilled workforce (providing employees with the skills, knowledge and tools they need to be successful, and promoting social equity, inclusiveness and cultural competence across the organization).

1. Employee Affinity Groups are employee-formed and employee-led.
2. A representative from the OEDI will serve as a liaison and ad hoc member to Employee Affinity Groups in order to support the groups' goals.
3. Employee Affinity Groups must:
 - a. Be formed around a shared characteristic or common interest that can positively affect professional development or retention. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - i. national origin
 - ii. race
 - iii. gender

- iv. sexual orientation
- v. gender identity
- vi. being a working parent
- vii. veteran status
- viii. caring for aging family members while working
- b. Be open to all WWCC employees (non-students).
 - i. As required by state and federal law and College policy, Employee Affinity Groups may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, veteran's status, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.
- c. Adhere to all College policies. Groups found to have violated college policy may lose their approved status.
- d. Keep all communications professional and collegial. Communications that are obscene, violent, defamatory or harassing are not allowed.
- e. Submit a brief annual summary each year (steps are outlined in the Employee Affinity Groups Administrative Procedure 5130).
- 4. Employee Affinity Groups may not be formed to promote or benefit any private company or organization, whether for-profit or non-profit.
- 5. As required by the Executive Ethics Act, Employee Affinity Groups may not use College resources to support or oppose any ballot proposition or candidate for public office.
- 6. Employees interested in forming an Employee Affinity Group should follow the steps outlined in the Employee Affinity Groups Administrative Procedure 5130.
- B. College Resources Available to Employee Affinity Groups - The College has determined that Employee Affinity Group meetings and informal mentoring and training activities enhance employee professional development, contribute to one's professional role in the College, and are reasonably related to a number of other official College purposes. Employee Affinity Groups are authorized to make use of the following state resources for the listed purposes:
 - 1. Physical Space
 - a. College shared space, including conference and break rooms may be used for group meetings on a space available basis.
 - i. Because shared space is limited and priority for use must be given to the performance of College business, it is possible that a scheduled Employee Affinity Groups meeting will be bumped when a room is necessary for College business.
 - b. Other college space (generally office space or cubicles) may be used when providing mentoring.
 - 2. Employee Time
 - a. Meetings, informal mentoring and training may occur during regular working hours and employees may be granted up to two (2) hours per month to participate in Employee Affinity Group events or meetings.
 - b. Employees preparing meeting agendas and/or training materials may use work time to prepare.
 - c. Participation in Employee Affinity Group activities may not interfere with the performance of the employee's regularly assigned duties. Employees who are overtime-eligible are reminded that any time spent engaged in College-sponsored activities constitutes work time. Such work, like all assigned work

performed by overtime eligible employees, is subject to requirements of the College Overtime rules.

- d. While supervisor approval is not required to join an Employee Affinity Group, employees should make their supervisors aware of their participation in an Employee Affinity Group.
3. Computer, Electronic Mail, and Telephones
 - a. College computers may be used to prepare meeting agenda and/or training materials.
 - b. Email and phones may be used to hold meetings by teleconference, convey information about upcoming meetings, communicate with one another between meetings, communicate with speakers or potential speakers, and provide advice and mentoring to others.
 4. The College anticipates that some Employee Affinity Groups and/or Employee Affinity Group members will ask to participate, or be invited to participate, in the development of College-sponsored training programs and in College outreach and recruitment. When Employee Affinity Group members are involved in such College management approved training or recruitment and outreach, they are performing College assigned work. As such, they will be able to make use of the same resources provided any employee performing the assigned tasks.
- C. Benefits available to the College - Some Employee Affinity Group members will informally mentor others, enhancing employee professional development and contributing to College career success. Many will also provide informal training at Employee Affinity Group meetings or, more formally, will work with the OEDI or Human Resources (HR) to participate in or offer more formal agency training.
1. Employee Affinity Groups are encouraged to communicate suggestions for improvements in College policy or practices to management through their Governance Council representative.
 2. Employee Affinity Group members may also be invited by OEDI or HR staff to help reach particular audiences or assist in expanding the applicant pool during employee recruitment activities.

<p>Policy Contact: <u>Margarita Banderas, Director of EDI</u></p> <p>Approved by (Department/Body): <u>Dr. Chad Hickox, President</u></p> <p>Date Originally Approved: <u>February 14, 2022</u></p> <p>Last Reviewed/Revised on: _____</p>
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