Welcome and Introduction to Affinity Groups

Thank you for your interest in Affinity Groups at the University of Hartford. These protocols and procedures are intended to provide general guidelines for employees interested in starting Affinity Groups.

These groups connect members of the University of Hartford community with each other and strengthens employee relationships with the institution. The primary focus of the Affinity Groups is to help advance and support inclusion and diversity goals throughout the institution, and to assist the University with the recruitment, retention, and development of all its employees.

By empowering its members, these connections will aid in promoting and ensuring an environment where all are valued, included, and empowered to succeed.

Please note that this document will be reviewed and revised continually, and it is subject to change. If you need more information or have questions, please contact the Affinity Group Coordinators:

Christine Grant
Office of the President
Executive Director for the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement
cgrant@hartford.edu or 860-768-4220

T. Stores
Office of the Provost
Assistant Provost and Dean of Faculty Development
tstores@hartford.edu or 860-768-4938
Networks of Engagement and Support to Succeed

Affinity Group

University of Hartford Mission

Employee organization of Affinity Groups is encouraged to provide opportunities for individuals to become more involved in campus life and to foster a culture of respect and inclusive community. This purpose reflects the intentions of President Woodward’s 12-point Plan for Action to promote inclusion, diversity, and equity among students, faculty and staff, and the Communities University of Hartford serves.

University of Hartford employees created Networks of Engagement and Support To Succeed Affinity Groups to coordinate and assist individuals in making connections across campus to build supportive safe havens, grow interests and hatch ideas, and spotlight achievements and accomplishments to improve University recruitment, retention, and promotion.

Affinity Groups are voluntary, employee-led groups that express the values of mutual understanding and shared community. Affinity Groups encourage inclusive membership to learn about others and provide support for similar interests and concerns. Affinity Groups do not exclude on the basis of sex, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, mental illness or ability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, sex characteristics, religious, creed, or individual political opinions.

Faculty and staff may use these safe spaces to support, understand, and share resources to connect with diverse members of the University of Hartford across colleges, units, or job classifications. Affinity Groups offer individuals numerous opportunities to become more enthusiastic and involved contributors to campus life.

Objectives:

1. Build and Create a Sense of Community
   - Develop a community and support network that nurtures and values the contribution of its staff, and faculty;
   - Play a role in fostering a community of support, respect and advancement;
   - Broadening cultural awareness on campus;
   - Recognizes the beneficial connection between excellence and diversity; and pursues activities to embrace equitable access for learning and growth;

2. Advocate for, and Support the Recruitment, Retention and Advancement of Faculty and Staff
   - Support the growth and professional development of staff and faculty
   - Assist the University in the area of recruiting, engaging and retaining employees
   - Promote and celebrate University of Hartford staff and faculty contributions and achievements

3. Network and Collaborate
   - Provide opportunities for social and professional networking between staff and faculty.
   - Be a collective voice for the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
Goal: To encourage the formation of employee organization of affinity groups to engage and connect University of Hartford community members across a variety of interests, identities, and support groups.

Affinity Group Categories

Affinity Groups categories help to focus interest while providing an open structure to accommodate a broad range of affinities. The Affinity Group categories are 1) identity-based, 2) professional communities, and 3) special interest and activity groups. We encourage staff and faculty to be involved in many of these Affinity Groups as they are a great way to meet new colleagues outside of one’s home department, find mentors/mentees, learn new skills, and develop leadership skills.

1). Identity-based Affinity Groups honor the diversity of our employees, while also offering a safe space on campus to share, support, and learn about each other.

2). Professional Community Affinity Groups assemble to promote the interests and professional development in specific fields or industries. Members of Professional Communities share knowledge and expertise to develop and refine skills beneficial to each person’s daily practice. Professional Communities believe in on-going leadership training and mentorship to enhance progress and growth in one’s career.

3). Special Interest and Activity Affinity Groups provide camaraderie and encouragement with like-minded peers. These groups form through the pursuit of activities centered around sports, hobbies and crafts, or to make connections with others experiencing similar life situations.

Affinity Group Leader Expectations:

Each Affinity Group should have a defined Leadership Team to include:

- Chair – this individual leads and oversees the function and meetings of the group. The Chair helps ensure that the established guidelines for the Affinity Groups are supported and outcomes are successful.

- Act as the main contact between the University and Executive Director for Diversity and Inclusion and the affinity group members. In most cases that means at least monthly communication reporting on activities, and provide and quarterly financial updates.

- Understand and uphold the university’s branding

- Vice Chair – individual(s) that assist and/or act in the absence of the Chair to oversee the function of the group. The Vice Chair helps ensure that the group is supported and outcomes are successful and other duties assigned

Operating Principles

1. Members must be employed by the University of Hartford.

2. Membership and participation in Affinity Groups shall be entirely voluntary. University of Hartford officers, administrators, or any one in a supervisory capacity, or members of the group may NOT coerce any employee into joining or participating.

3. Membership in Affinity Groups must be open to any and all interested staff and faculty

4. Participation in Affinity Groups events must be open to any and all interested employees.
5. Any program sponsored by Affinity Groups must have a financial plan to support activities.

6. Affinity Groups are not intended to and shall not duplicate or replace the activities of the recognized bargaining units at the University.

7. Staff members may join as many Affinity Groups as they wish. Staff Affinity Group members are eligible to request for release time to attend Affinity Group meetings up to 2 (two) hours monthly. Additional release time requested may be considered and granted at the discretion of the supervisor.

Meeting Guidelines

1. Each Affinity Group must hold at least 2 meetings annually.

2. Meetings are encouraged to have an agenda and to make decisions consensus.

3. Notes should be taken at Affinity Group business meetings. Note takers should reproduce and distribute the notes in a timely fashion. A copy of the notes for each Affinity Group meeting should be submitted to the Affinity Group coordinating committee.

4. All marketing and promotional materials should be submitted to the Affinity Group coordinating committee and the Office of Marketing and Communications for approval.

5. Leaders of new Affinity Groups should attend the Affinity Groups coordinators orientation prior to the first official meeting.

Funding:

At the discretion of the leadership of the University, and with the approval of University’s Chief Financial Officer, approved Affinity Groups will obtain limited funding of $200 each academic year.

- Affinity Groups are required to keep track and produce accurate record of expenditures. When a purchase is made, leaders must submit original receipts and proper paper work for reimbursement for approval by Christine Grant, Presidents Office.
  - Purchases $25 and under, leaders should complete a petty cash voucher.
  - Purchases over $25, leaders must complete a Travel expense Voucher (TEV) and submit.
  - Leaders are required to submit quarterly reports to Christine Grant, Presidents Office on the amounts spent, and what was accomplished through these expenditures.
  - If an Affinity Groups group dissolves, the University of Hartford will not be responsible for any debts incurred by the Affinity Group.

Dissolving Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups may be dissolved when:

1. The group chooses to dissolve itself. Such dissolution should be reported to the Affinity Groups coordinator.
2. An Affinity Group specifically formed to undertake one or more short-term project(s) has completed the task.

3. The Affinity Group does not submit required financial statements and annual reports to the Affinity Group coordinator.

4. The Affinity Groups coordinator concludes that the group no longer has clear relevance or has become insufficiently accountable for its activities, or present a legal or ethical liability to the University of Hartford.
UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

Affinity Group Registration Form

1. Proposed name of your Affinity Group:

2. Name(s) of coordinators (at least two required) with contact information:

3. **A Description** – a brief statement of what you want the Affinity Group to represent and accomplish; its purpose and reason for existing.

4. **Value proposition** – clearly defined benefits that faculty and staff will receive by joining and participating within the Affinity Group.

**Affinity Group Application Authorization**
Following the successful submission of the application, including the requested information above, the officer(s) will be contacted by the Affinity Group coordinating committee to discuss next steps.

I understand that membership and participation are voluntary and the group must be open to everyone.

As a leader, you play a vital role in ensuring an inclusive campus environment where all are valued, included, and empowered to succeed

Applicant Name __________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________________________ Date: ________

*Send questions or requests for more information regarding your Affinity Group application to the Affinity Group coordinating committee, Christine Grant or T. Stores.*