



**STATEMENT OF
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER
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before the

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

on

**“DEVELOPING FEDERAL EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS: MENTORING,
INTERNSHIPS, AND TRAINING IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT”**

April 29, 2010

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to testify at this important hearing on mentoring and training for employees and supervisors in the Federal Government. I was very glad to learn that you were holding this hearing and to be reminded that we share a keen interest in this topic.

At OPM, we continue to seek ways to strengthen supervisory training in Federal agencies and encourage the creation of new mentoring opportunities for employees and prospective employees. These are essential elements of the effort to nurture a high-quality, high-performing, workforce that engages the talents and skills of Americans from all walks of life.

Supervisory Training

It is hard to see how there can be any disagreement about the importance of providing managers and supervisors with the training they need to succeed. Numerous studies link the performance of supervisors and managers to workforce retention and organizational performance. Requiring agencies to provide such training sends a strong message that well-trained managers are critical to the success of an organization and that supervisors and managers are accountable for their performance. Emphasizing the importance of supervisory training also makes it clear that supervisory skills are valued in their own right and that the opportunity to become a supervisor or manager is not merely a reward for achievements unrelated to one's potential as a supervisor.

Mr. Chairman, we at OPM appreciate the efforts of both you and Senator Voinovich over the years to move the Government forward in its approach to supervisory training. Senator



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Voinovich led the effort to enact the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004, which requires agencies to establish a comprehensive management succession program that includes training to develop managers. OPM published final regulations last year incorporating the requirements in that Act. Specifically, these regulations require supervisory training within one year of a new supervisor's appointment and retraining at least once every three years on options and strategies to:

- Mentor employees
- Improve employees' performance and productivity
- Conduct performance appraisals, and
- Identify and assist employees in addressing unacceptable performance

Additionally, agencies must also provide training to employees when they make significant transitions. This could include, for example, movement from a non-supervisory position to a management position, or from a management job to an executive post. OPM is currently developing guidance to assist agencies in implementing the final regulations. Our plan is to include this guidance in a newly revised training policy handbook that we hope to finish later this year.

Federal Supervisory Training Act (S. 674)

Mr. Chairman, I know you also have introduced the Federal Supervisory Training Act (S. 674), with the aim of enhancing Federal employee and manager performance, and in turn, agency performance. The bill includes requirements for new supervisors to receive training within the first 12 months of appointment and retraining every three years, which would have to include:

- Mentoring and motivating employees
- Improving employees' performance and productivity
- Fostering a work environment of fairness, respect and equal opportunity
- Addressing reports of hostile work environment, reprisal or harassment
- Prohibited personnel practices
- Collective bargaining and union participation rights, and
- Other topics necessary for carrying out the duties or responsibilities of a supervisor

The delivery of the training would have to be interactive and instructor-based, rather than merely administered online. In addition, agencies would be required to 1) develop mentoring programs for new supervisors, and 2) evaluate the effectiveness of the supervisory training programs.

At the request of the Subcommittee staff, OPM recently conducted an informal inventory of all of the President's Management Council agencies to determine what agencies are doing to meet the supervisory training requirements in our regulations and those that would be required under S. 674. Twenty-five agencies responded to the request. About half of the agencies we surveyed



currently are meeting those requirements, and a majority of the others are developing supervisory training programs to fully comply with the requirements.

Most agencies go beyond the requirements in the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act and OPM regulations and offer new supervisors training in additional key areas such as recruiting and hiring, labor and employee relations, team building, strategic planning, conflict management, financial management, and providing career guidance to employees. Of the 25 agencies that responded, five agencies, including the Department of Defense, meet all of the additional training requirements prescribed in S. 674. Six more agencies meet the requirements in the bill, except for the requirement to establish mentoring programs for new supervisors.

Mentoring programs

Some larger agencies have established supervisory mentoring programs as part of their succession planning efforts. New supervisors can benefit from having mentors themselves, as well as from learning how to be mentors for their employees. Though we are seeing more of both kinds of mentoring, there is always more we can do to facilitate it.

Mentoring is critical and can happen in many ways - through formal programs and through day-to-day interaction with one's supervisors and fellow employees. The Federal Workforce Flexibility Act requires agencies to provide training to managers and supervisors on mentoring their employees. Within the Federal Government, mentoring is often a component in developmental programs like the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP), the Presidential Management Fellow Program (PMF), or the USDA Graduate School Executive Leadership Program (ELP).

Many agencies run formal stand-alone mentoring programs to enhance personal and career development. Formal mentoring programs have structure, oversight, and clear and specific organizational goals. To assist agencies in the development of successful mentoring programs, OPM recently issued a publication on mentoring best practices and hosted a "Best Practices in Mentoring" forum where five agencies discussed their mentoring programs with the Federal learning and development community. Agencies need to ensure that employees who are interested in mentoring are provided that opportunity, to stimulate individual growth, provide career enhancement, and thereby strengthen the agencies' capacity to retain valued employees.

In addition, last year OPM provided train-the-trainer sessions for agency human resources practitioners on developing a strategic "on-boarding" program to maximize employee productivity, engagement, and retention. On-boarding is not limited to orientation or mentoring; it is an ongoing process that includes welcoming, training, and acculturating a new hire. Many agencies reported providing formal and informal mentoring programs for their employees and interns. These mentoring programs provide supervisors and seasoned employees with an opportunity to share their knowledge, expertise, and experience with other employees interested in developing their skills and enhancing their careers.



Mentoring is also an integral part of developing and retaining a diverse workforce. Federal agencies need managers and supervisors with the skills to manage and mentor diverse populations. Managing diversity within the workplace means creating an environment where everyone is empowered to contribute to the work of the unit; it requires sensitivity to and awareness of the interactions among staff and between staff and leadership, and knowing how to articulate clear expectations. Effective mentoring in a multicultural setting involves understanding diverse learning styles and approaches to problem-solving, as well as other cultural differences, and appreciating how to use those differences to serve the organization's mission. Mentoring to diverse populations is crucial to meeting and exceeding organizational goals.

Federal Career Intern Program

You also asked me to address OPM's role in overseeing the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP).

FCIP was established by Executive order in 2000 to help agencies recruit exceptional individuals and to train and develop them for careers in analyzing and implementing public programs during a time when the threat of a retirement wave was imminent. Agencies are required to develop two-year formal training and job assignment programs for each career intern. Upon successful completion of the two-year internship, agencies have the option of bringing the interns into their permanent workforce.

The Executive order that created the FCIP charged OPM with overseeing FCIP and developing appropriate merit-based procedures for the program. Through our implementing regulations and other agency guidance, we pressed upon agencies the need to develop merit-based procedures for recruiting and selecting interns in accordance with the Governmentwide regulations governing employment in the excepted service. These regulations provide specific instructions for agencies to develop and implement programs, including:

- developing procedures for accepting applications, and evaluating and selecting candidates according to the regulations on employment in the excepted service (which include the requirement to use valid assessments, and to apply veterans' preference),
- designing, implementing, and documenting their formal programs for training and development, and
- planning, coordinating , and monitoring their programs.

We will be reviewing the FCIP and making recommendations for its future as part of the Administration's Federal hiring reform initiative.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to participate in this discussion. I would be happy to respond to whatever questions you may have.