Affinity Groups/Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
Promoting an Inclusive Environment at BSU

What They Are:

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are one way that organizations create a welcoming and inclusive environment for underrepresented groups. These groups have been in use in corporate America for quite a while and have been found at some higher education institutions such as MIT, where you can find groups for Millennials; Women; LGBT individuals; Latino; Asian Pacific American individuals; Individuals with Disabilities; and African, Black American, and Caribbean individuals. Many of these groups were once known as Affinity Groups. Affinity Groups served a slightly different purpose and had different outcomes as the table below outlines. Employee Resource Groups can encompass the outcomes of associated with Affinity Groups, but have additional outcomes as noted in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Recognize</th>
<th>Promote</th>
<th>Leverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create community for underrepresented groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Expand membership of populations/ create formal governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Group Formed</td>
<td>Affinity Groups</td>
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<td>Employee Resource Groups</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>• Feel welcomed</td>
<td>• Establish connections with members and allies</td>
<td>• Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establish social connections</td>
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<td>• Address and communicate concerns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Network building across departments</td>
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Purposes of ERGs

- They create an open forum for staff who share common interests/concerns to meet and support one another in creatively addressing those concerns
- They provide a resource to BSU leadership regarding staff/community issues, needs and policies
- They advance a respectful and caring community

Guiding Principles for ERGs

- All ERGs are open to all employees
- ERGs promote diversity, openness, understanding and inclusiveness
- ERG participation by employees is voluntary
- ERGs adhere to BSU’s policies and procedures
- ERGs strive to provide long-term business benefit to the university as well as professional/personal benefit to participants

ERGs help to create an inclusive workplace by:

- Contributing to an inclusive workplace through recruiting and retention, and by providing an informal welcome to new employees and networking and mentoring opportunities for their members
- Creating an open forum for employees who share common interests/concerns to meet and support one another
- Providing a resource to BSU leadership regarding staff/community issues, needs, and policies

Successful Employee Resource Groups:

- Have formal governance, including defined roles, reporting structures, and expected outcomes.
- Have measurable internal and external goals. Internal goals may be to partner with HR to recruit for diversity and help with retention efforts and help make and foster community connections on matters pertaining to the group focus.
- Have member from across all levels of the organization including senior leadership.