New Employee Onboarding

Selecting a Peer Partner

WHAT IS A PEER PARTNER?

A peer partner is a fellow employee (other than the manager/supervisor) who supports a new employee during his/her first months on the job. The peer partner's role is to offer advice and guidance regarding the day-to-day aspects of working at UW-Madison. A peer partner contributes to the successful onboarding experience by offering encouragement and assistance as the new employee acclimates to the culture and workplace.

WHY ASSIGN A PEER PARTNER?

The purpose of providing a peer partner is to help welcome the new employee and affirm their decision to join UW-Madison. A peer partner helps to reduce the initial confusion and uncertainty a new employee may experience by being available to answer basic questions, facilitate connections, and assist in explaining and navigating the culture.

SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

The manager/supervisor is typically responsible for selecting the peer partner for the new employee. Thoughtful consideration should be given to the characteristics listed below.

- Understands and positively contributes to the UW-Madison and unit culture
- Expresses interest in being a peer partner
- Demonstrates a positive attitude about UW-Madison and the unit
- Familiar with the employee's role and work unit
- Is a solid performer
- Is well regarded, trusted and respected by others
- Willingness and ability to be accessible to the new employee
- Holds a peer level position (this may mean choosing a peer from another unit)
- Maintains confidentiality

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

A peer partner should understand what is expected of them prior to the new employee joining the organization. Every peer partner relationship will be unique based on the needs and style of each person, however, a general understanding of the responsibilities and commitment is important to success. The time commitment will differ based on the relationship and specific program structure. Typically the peer partner role will not exceed 1-2 hours per week during the first few weeks, and less thereafter. Expectations will vary according to specific onboarding programs and unique unit needs, but general responsibilities include:

- Welcome the new employee (on or before the first day), introduce yourself and describe your role
- Assist with introductions and connections to others
- Act as an informational resource on general procedures, norms, day-to-day operations
- Help the new employee integrate and understand the culture
- Provide opportunities to experience new things (both within the unit as well as the campus community)
- Check in often with the new employee during the first weeks/months
- Answer questions and refer to appropriate resources