

Hotline

The Princeton University Plasma Physics Laboratory is a United States Department of Energy Facility

Lab Pushes Quality Improvement

Responding to Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary's call to "change the way we do business," the Lab is reaching for new highs through quality improvement.

The Quality Improvement and Renewal Committee (QIRC), which was established more than a year ago, has been addressing how to improve quality, user satisfaction, efficiency, and operations at PPPL. In addition to QIRC's work, improvement teams have been instituted at the Lab and several Department and Division Heads at PPPL have implemented quality improvement plans for their areas.

Eye to the Future

The push to increase quality at PPPL — as well as at all other DOE facilities — was directed by Secretary O'Leary. Under the Energy Secretary, the DOE set new priorities that focus on efficiency and effectiveness with an eye to the future. These priorities, which will be implemented through a plan for quality improvement, are aligned with the President's objectives for the future.

"Our goal is to carry out our piece of the promise President Clinton brought with him into office: to reinvent government to make it responsible, accountable, and cost effective, and to put the public's interest first," said Secretary O'Leary in published reports.

The task to improve productivity, customer satisfaction, employee mo-



Hazel O'Leary

...re, and commitment at PPPL was embraced by Lab management. Said PPPL Director Ronald C. Davidson, "As Director, I am committed to creating a vision and a working en-

vironment that will permit the achievement of research objectives on a faster schedule and at a lower cost, to position PPPL to be more competitive in the research and development marketplace, and to satisfy the expectations of our customers and stakeholders, including the DOE, Congress, PPPL employees, Princeton University, Princeton, and the surrounding communities."

To reach its objectives, QIRC has addressed specific concerns at the Lab, discussed concepts for continuous improvement, and evaluated quality improvement plans and methods at other Department of Energy Laboratories.

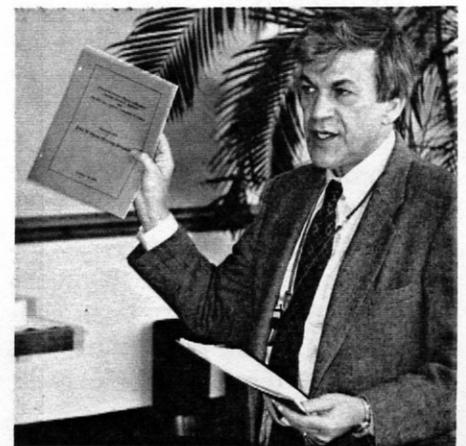
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DACW Co-Hosts Breakfast

Over bagels and coffee on a recent February morning, the Director's Advisory Committee on Women (DACW) recounted its achievements and unfolded its aspirations.

"We're here to improve the working conditions for *everyone*," said DACW Chairperson Phyllis Schwarz, who addressed about 50 employees at the DACW Open Meeting Breakfast.

The breakfast was co-hosted by PPPL Director Ronald Davidson, who joined Schwarz in welcoming



PPPL Director Ronald C. Davidson discusses DACW's phases, which are outlined in the booklet he is holding.

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Quality

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"Not all of the Laboratory's challenges are technical in nature. Interpersonal and organizational relationships must also be considered when developing a plan for quality improvement," said Geoff Gettelfinger, who is the Committee's Chairperson.

Communications

While identifying areas for improvement, QIRC chose communications as the first project. A QIRC subcommittee was formed to evaluate communications and has delivered its recommendations to the Director.

Said Gettelfinger, "A lot of our problems at the Lab stem from the fact that we don't talk enough to each other. It's that simple. We need increased awareness of one another's needs."

The subcommittee on communications developed a survey and randomly chose 60 PPPL employees to respond to it. In the survey, respondents were asked what topics they were and were not well informed about, how well they exchanged information with their supervisors, and what the best means of receiving information were. Respondents were also asked for suggestions.

The results of the survey — along with other recommendations from the subcommittee — were given to Davidson, who used the information to formulate PPPL's Policy on Internal Communications. (*See sidebar on Communications Policy.*)

According to the policy, PPPL management should use techniques that emphasize two-way communications and should keep employees informed of the Lab's objectives, plans, and policies. In addition, management must give staff members a clear understanding of the conditions of their employment. The policy also

states that employees are obligated to promote communications and to do their part to keep informed. In addition, Department Heads are responsible for implementing the policy, and managers and supervisors are responsible for carrying it out through direct, regular exchanges with staff.

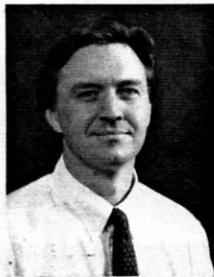
Coinciding with QIRC's efforts are various quality improvement activities being undertaken in the Facilities and Environmental Management and Support Services areas and through four improvement teams at the Lab, as well as through individual efforts.

"A lot of our problems at the Lab stem from the fact that we don't talk enough to each other. It's that simple."

—Geoff Gettelfinger

"The Facilities and Environmental Management Division has been using quality improvement techniques to measure our performance," said J.W. Anderson, Head of the Division.

Anderson said the Division is looking at timeliness and quality of completing work requests. In addition, it is presently completing a second customer satisfaction survey that asks a random sample of employees to rate the services provided by the Division. "The initial survey, completed in February, 1994, provided valuable feedback on services which required additional attention," he said.



Geoff Gettelfinger

In the Support Services Department, Head John DeLooper distributed a survey to employees asking them to rate their supervisors. Answers were submitted anonymously.

"We collected the data and gave feedback to the supervisors on their management styles and offered recommendations for improvement," said DeLooper. "It was a useful tool for supervisors to use in evaluating themselves."

Also under Support Services, Jim Graham was chosen as Acting Head of the newly established Process Improvement Group to support QIRC and Human Resources in quality goals. Graham heads teams that are assessing the Lab's travel authorization and reimbursement procedures, how visitors and construction subcontractors are processed and trained, and the streamlining of TFTR's design and configuration changes.

The teams are working on the travel reimbursement process with AT&T's Quality, Engineering, Software, and Technologies (QUEST) team. QUEST, which evaluates projects and processes and develops recommendations for improvements, is assisting PPPL in sifting through travel data and in developing a plan for improvement of the travel reimbursement process.

Improvement Teams

In addition, there are four improvement teams headed by key management members, each of which is addressing one of the following issues: equitable sharing of the workload among staff; management training; how to best coordinate present and future research programs to optimize achievement of the Lab's research mission; and defining the roles of individuals at the Lab.

DeLooper, noting there are several smaller areas in which individuals are developing improvement plans, commented, "The key is there

are a lot of little things going on that will eventually lead to big improvements in how the Lab operates. Change is gradual and sometimes difficult, but it must occur if there is to be improvement."

In the meantime, QIRC will continue to identify opportunities for Laboratory improvement and to fur-

nish recommendations to Davidson. Gettelfinger summarized the goal of the Committee by saying, "We hope to perpetuate a sense of pride that the employees of PPPL have always felt about this place. This is really a special place. And if we continue to invest in the people, it will continue to be a special place."

The Committee Chairperson urged employees to contact him about issues for QIRC consideration.

"Don't keep silent. This is a perfect opportunity to assure that all important observations about the way we do business are heard," he said.

HOTLINE will continue to follow quality improvement issues. ●

Internal Communications Policy

Effective communication with, and among, employees is critical to attain programmatic and organizational objectives. Informed employees, at all levels in the Laboratory's work force, can best respond to the challenges of a dynamic environment. Effective communication to employees fosters a better understanding of issues as they affect the Laboratory and enables employees to become more involved and informed; better able to support the Laboratory's objectives. The purpose of this policy is to define the actions and the responsibilities necessary to insure the open and frequent flow of information to and from employees at the Plasma Physics Laboratory and to foster more effective and harmonious relationships. To this end, the management of the Laboratory makes a commitment to ensure that all employees are informed about matters of importance to the Laboratory and to them.

The Laboratory's employee communication program is based on the following principles:

- *It is important that employees be informed about developments which impact on the work they do, their job security, their opportunity to contribute to the attainment of Laboratory objectives and to grow in skill and knowledge.*
- *It is the responsibility of management to establish, support, and facilitate the use of communication vehicles, techniques, and programs to insure that essential information flows downward from management, upward from subordinates, and laterally, between different work groups.*
- *Laboratory managers and supervisors are key to the successful implementation of the organization's communication objectives, serve as a communication link with employees, and demonstrate the Laboratory's responsiveness to needs and concerns.*

The Laboratory should employ techniques that emphasize the importance of two-way communications; communicate frequently and regularly in an open and timely manner; keep employees abreast of Laboratory objectives, plans, and policies which impact them; ensure employees have a clear understanding of the conditions of their employment including information about the responsibilities of their jobs and their performance; and periodically assesses communication needs of the organization and the effectiveness of the communications program.

Each Laboratory employee is responsible for promoting effective and responsible communications and must actively do their part to be informed. The Director of the Laboratory has the responsibility to promulgate this policy and to nurture a proactive environment in which this policy is implemented by line management.

*The Head of Human Resources and Administration is responsible for assuring compliance with the policy, developing an annual communication strategy in support of Laboratory objectives, providing communications skill training to managers and supervisors, and establishing priorities to accomplish these objectives. The Heads of Departments are responsible for implementing this policy and assigning the resources required. Managers and Supervisors are responsible for carrying out the Laboratory's communication policy, through day-to-day interaction and direct exchanges with employees. (This policy is in the **PPPL Policy/Organization Manual**, which is available in the Library.)*

DACW

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the attendees and in recapping some of the Committee's accomplishments.

"The DACW has really encouraged a lot of good initiatives at the Laboratory, which have been summarized in this booklet," said Davidson, holding up a copy of the publication that lists DACW's three phases of development and activity.

Schwarz discussed the progress of the Committee through these phases, which include identifying the issues of concern to women at the Lab, addressing and providing information on those issues, and providing self-help and developmental programs, while striving to improve the work environment and culture at PPPL.

The Chairperson said concerns identified include salary inequities and the lack of promotions for women, as well as the lack of visibility of women at the Lab. According to the published summary of DACW's phases, several salary adjustments have been made in recent years to compensate for inequities and DACW



DACW Chairperson Phyllis Schwarz (right corner) addresses the group at the DACW Open Meeting Breakfast.



Lynne Yager (left) and Ann McKee chat over coffee at the DACW Meeting.

has been working with administration to reduce employment disparity at PPPL. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of women appointed to decision making committees in the past few years.

The second phase addresses other issues and concerns identified by women such as sexual harassment awareness training, which is now mandatory for every employee, and poor communications between Main Campus and PPPL. To improve communications, DACW member emeritus Lynne Yager volunteered to serve as liaison to receive and distribute information from Main Campus, and DACW member Sara Flohr was chosen as representative to the President's Standing Committee on the Status of Women, said Schwarz.

Career Advances for Women

The Committee's third phase, which focuses on the support for career advances for women, is being accomplished through networking and self-development activities. The DACW is presently working with the Lab's Training Office to increase staff training opportunities. Also, the Committee and the Human Resources Division have sponsored a series of informal lunchtime career development forums. (Sessions are scheduled today, March 14, and April 12.)

"We're trying to encourage you to take the steps you need in order to promote yourself," said Schwarz.

Certification and Training Head Sue Murphy said there are several seminars scheduled to begin in March. "I know that managers feel strongly about the importance of training," she said.

Discussing the Committee's accomplishments, Schwarz noted one of DACW's "wonderful successes" — the "Take Our Daughters to Work Day" last spring. A second day for bringing daughters to the Lab is in the works for April 27. Other Committee achievements include the creation of directories of the Lab's women employees and the establishment of the DACW Information Board (across from the elevator in LOB West near the Main Lobby outside rooms B 140-141), said Schwarz.



At the breakfast, from left, are Faith Robak (back to camera), Lynne Yager, Dawn Horner, and PPPL Deputy Director Dale Meade.

Davidson noted that the Lab has made significant progress on some DACW objectives, while improvements in professional development opportunities and in communications have a ways to go. One step toward better communications at the Lab was made with the development of the Internal Communications Policy. The Director noted that a copy of the policy was included in the booklet handed out at the breakfast.

Davidson thanked the Committee for its work, praising members for their proactive efforts. "Keep up the excellent work. The most important thing you can do is to keep stimulating the system ... and urge us to respond," he said. ●

PPPL Quality Assurance Plan Made Simpler

Focuses on the "What's," not the "How's"

by Judy Malsbury

The PPPL Institutional Quality Assurance Plan has been significantly revised. The result is a much shorter Plan — only 8 pages long! This revision has major impact on the work performed by all of us at PPPL.

The Plan was extensively reviewed and negotiated with all the Heads of the Departments and Projects, the PPPL Deputy Director, the PPPL Director, and the Manager of DOE's Princeton Area Office. It recognizes that Line Management and the staff are responsible for the quality of the work.

Major Change

The major change is that the Plan focuses on the "What's," not the "How's." It provides guidance for all of us but does not tell us how to do our jobs. It also places the responsibility on each Project, Department, or Division Manager of assuring that their work meets the requirements of the Plan.

It is your job, when working on a project or performing work within your Division, to be aware of the standards and guidelines that Line Management has established for your work. Those working on more than one Project may have to be familiar with more than one set of standards and guidelines. These should be appropriate for the type of work you are performing, and allow you to be more efficient and to have more control over your work.

Future articles will describe features of the Plan. In the meantime, get a copy of the Plan and read it. Your managers have a copy, one is available in the PPPL ES&H/QA Plans Manual at the Library, or you can request a copy from Quality Assurance. Discuss the Plan with your supervisor and its impact on your work. And, as always, we in Quality Assurance are available to help you with this endeavor. Contact us at ext. 2415.

Blood Drive

**PPPL's annual
Red Cross Blood Drive
Friday, March 24
9 AM to 2 PM
at the Firehouse**



Call the Dispensary at ext. 3200 to schedule an appointment.

Lost and Found

Beaded Brooch

A beaded, multi-colored brooch, which resembles a toy soldier, was found in the Upper End Parking Lot, C-Site. If you have lost this pin or know who it belongs to, please call ext. 2898 or pick it up at the Emergency Services Unit on the second floor of the Firehouse.





*Happy
St. Patrick's Day!*

HOTLINE

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