



UC RIVERSIDE EH&S PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

A training team at UC Riverside collaborated with University of California and California State University Environmental Health & Safety departments to design and deliver professional development classroom workshops and online training courses. This free hybrid program meets a need for training and eliminates the costs of interstate travel to training conferences.

University of California and California State University risk and safety staff collaborated to provide professional development to hundreds of people throughout several campuses. This was achieved through sharing online training courses and taking turns hosting classroom workshops. Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) department directors coordinated to send staff to workshops at nearby campuses in order to reduce or eliminate travel costs.

The project began by recognizing that the lack of communication and influence skills of some personnel presented major reputational risks to EH&S departments and threatened safety culture initiatives. This was because safety staff, while armed with technical knowledge, would benefit with a better understanding of the interpersonal interactions, or “people skills,” needed for successful programming.

Unfortunately, the only solution available was the EH&S Academy hosted at the University of Texas. Barriers to participation for both systems included excessive travel costs, expensive registration fees, and a 2017 California state law prohibiting state funding for travel to Texas (AB 1887).

In response, a training team at UC Riverside tackled the problem using existing resources, and in 2016, the EH&S Professional Education program was created. This innovative solution developed knowledge through eLearning: Staff completed online training courses and then attended a workshop, code named “How not-to-be-a-jerk training.” Upon completion, they were issued EH&S professional certifications and continuing education units.

To create the online training courses, web conference software recorded the speaker presentations. Later, eLearning software was used to edit and publish the presentations to a shared learning management system, which is free of charge.

Within a couple of months, the entire program was online for consumption at the convenience of participants without the costs of hotel, travel or rentals. Participants are also able to perform their daily work as the courses may be taken online anytime; users may also pick up where they left off if they need more than one sitting to finish the program.

This is the first time that a hybrid model was used to develop professional skills for EH&S staff. To date, 461 attendees have participated, and the professional education program is a valuable service for approximately 600 staff in safety departments throughout the UC and CSU systems.

MILESTONES

March 31
2017

- UC Riverside records online training courses.

Nov 14
2017

- First workshop is held at UC Irvine.

March 1
2018

- California State University San Marcos coordinates participants in program. Free access granted to online training using NeoLMS (a cloud-based learning management system) through UC Riverside.

March 28
2018

- CSU participants attend workshop held at UC Riverside.

April 17
2018

- CSU participants attend workshop held at UC Davis.

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

Four hundred and sixty-one attendees participated from both the UC and CSU systems.

Eighty-seven percent of participants indicated the workshops were either “good” or “very good.”

The top concepts and skills learned were leadership styles, communication, teamwork, environmental health skills and hazardous-waste skills.

Ninety-three percent of participants reported changes in behavior attributed to the course.

After the workshop, each learning objective received at least a 90 percent confidence rating.

Each presentation received at least 78 percent positive rating from participants.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

This is the first time that a hybrid model was used to develop professional skills for EH&S staff.

The EH&S generalist online training courses, which may be completed at the user’s convenience, are required before registering for the in-person EH&S professional workshop so that each participant begins the program with the same baseline knowledge.

During the class, participants are provided supplementary learning via group activities and technical stations based on online prerequisites.

The participants recognize the value of the certificates awarded, and some staff hang their certificates in frames over their cubicles, and others submit copies of it for their personnel, résumé and professional files and performance appraisals.

LESSONS LEARNED

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Organizers should plan for more attendees than registered. For example, there were 90 attendees at a workshop designed for 60 people. This caused some logistical issues with supplies, seats, small group activities and overall experience.

PROJECT TEAM

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FURTHER REFERENCES

EH&S Professional workshop website:
<https://uctraining.wixsite.com/ehs-professional>

University of California Risk & Safety training website:
<http://training.ucr.edu>

