

## **The University of Mississippi Training and Development Program**

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*Abstract:*

*The University of Mississippi has a comprehensive management training program entitled MASH –Management and Administrative Seminars for Human Resources. The purpose of MASH is to provide quality training to those individuals in supervisory positions looking to improve their skills, as well as those seeking a supervisory position. This program provides training in various areas including Employment Law, Hiring Procedures, Diversity, Effective Communication, Conflict Management, as well as effective leadership skills (Teambuilding, Coaching/Mentoring and Delegating). This program provides employees with the necessary tools to be an effective leader.*

## **Introduction of the Organization:**

The University of Mississippi is a public, comprehensive, research institution that exists to enhance the educational, economic, healthcare, social and cultural foundations of the state, region, and nation. As the oldest public institution of higher learning in the state of Mississippi and as a Carnegie Research Extensive institution, the University's primary functions are the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge through a variety of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs and public service activities. The University's main campus at Oxford emphasizes a traditional, residential educational experience, with a central College of Liberal Arts and several professional schools. The University's regional campuses in Tupelo and Southaven emphasize professional offerings and primarily serve adult learners. The University Medical Center in Jackson includes the University Hospitals and Clinics as well as Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Health Related Professions, Dentistry, and Graduate Studies.

The University educates students to assume leadership roles in the state, nation, and world through its nationally recognized programs of undergraduate, graduate, and professional study. Its teaching, research, and service missions are characterized by equal access and equal opportunity to all who qualify. The state's Flagship University is now also its largest. The combined enrollment from all University of Mississippi campuses exceeds 17,000 and the endowment has surpassed \$400 million.

The Human Resource Department is located on the main campus in Oxford, Mississippi. This department is a service oriented office, committed to the highest standards of excellence, efficiency, and continuous improvement for the diverse University population. As a part of the department's mission, the training and

development staff are available to enhance the University faculty and staff and to offer all employees opportunities for personal and professional growth.

**Statement of the Problem/Initiative:**

The University of Mississippi is no different than many other organizations. We compete for qualified, competent staff in today's tight labor market. We came to realize our greatest recruitment asset was our own staff. Our front line managers and supervisors are a key to low turnover and recruitment of quality new employees. A careful assessment was done of the current training program. Based on this assessment, the Department of Human Resources developed a training program specifically for those individuals in supervisory positions who are looking to improve their skills as well as those seeking supervisory positions. This program was created in 2002 and implemented during the spring of 2003.

**Design:**

The Human Resource personnel began researching this project during the 2001-2002 Academic Year. Benchmark studies were completed using the internet, phone, electronic-mail, and formal letters to other institutions and/or companies who had similar programs available to their employees. Through this research, as well as a complete understanding of the current program resources, the Human Resource department was able to decide which areas to include in this program. In order to maximize the budget, the Human Resource department drew on the expertise of the faculty and staff as instructors. The total cost to the Human Resource department was \$2,100. Since the cost

of this program was minimal, the series was offered at no charge to the employee or the department for which they worked.

The title of our educational series is called Management and Administrative Seminars for Human Resources or MASH. This program provides training in various areas including Employment Law, Hiring Procedures, Diversity, Effective Communication, Conflict Management, as well as effective leadership skills (Teambuilding, Coaching/Mentoring and Delegating). Through these courses and the discussion within the course, MASH provides employees with the necessary tools to be effective leaders.

Employees wishing to attend MASH must complete an application, stating the reasons why they wish to attend as well as their goals upon graduation. Due to the time commitment, employees must also have their supervisor's signature before submitting the application. All applications are reviewed by a seven person committee consisting of professors, administrative and staff members from all University divisions. The committee selects only 20 applicants for each series.

This structured program is held every spring and lasts four months. Participants meet twice per month for approximately four hours each session. To ensure transfer of training, monthly multiple-choice tests are given. At the conclusion of the program, a comprehensive final exam is administered. Participants are given one hour to complete the 25 question monthly exams and two hours to complete the 50 question final exam.

If an employee misses a session, he/she can make-up one session by video. If a participant misses two or three sessions, he/she will have to come back the next year to finish his/her certification. The participant will not have to go through the entire program

again. They will need to attend just the sessions he/she missed. If an employee misses more than three sessions, he/she will be dropped from the program and must reapply the next year. Employees must earn a minimum of 420 points out of a total of 600 points (70% of total points) to graduate from MASH. Upon graduation, the employees receive a certificate and a plaque. As an additional incentive, graduates of the program are eligible to receive a professional development increase of \$250 to their annual salary.

## **General Course Descriptions**

### **Laws and Policies**

**General Employment Law** – This section provides information on the basics of several employment laws. Participants learn about the Fair Labor Standards Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Family Medical Leave Act, Sexual Harassment, Equal Employment Opportunity and more.

**HR Policies and Procedures** – This section covers various University policies and procedures. Participants learn information about payroll, leave time, general policies, and organizations and services.

**General Benefits Overview** – This section discusses current University benefits such as health, dental, life, and retirement. Workers Compensation is also covered.

### **Employment Policies**

**UM's Hiring Process from Start to Finish** - This seminar answers questions regarding the termination of employees and the hiring process. Helpful pointers for conducting interviews, checking references, and the ins and outs of the online applicant tracking system are also shared at this time.

**Interviewing** – This section teaches participants different techniques for conducting an interview. They also learn which questions can and cannot be asked.

### **Supervisory Skills**

**Conflict Management** – This seminar covers effective techniques to use in workplace situations to avoid conflict among co-workers.

**Understanding and Appreciating Diversity** – Today's workforce is extremely diverse. Because of this, employees need to understand how to deal with people of different cultures, age groups and genders. This seminar provides three basic approaches to effectively handle diversity issues in the work place.

**Dealing with Difficult People** – Every individual has his or her own unique personality. For some people, it is hard to deal with others whose personality conflicts with theirs. This seminar is designed to teach participants how to deal with the various personalities in the work place.

**Effective Communication** - Many workplace misunderstandings occur due to miscommunication or no communication at all. This seminar teaches participants how to effectively express themselves in email as well as face to face conversations.

### **Managing Employees**

**Coaching and Mentoring** – Managers today are required to be a little more hands-on with their employees. Some managers tend to play more of a coaching role. This seminar teaches the necessary skills to be an effective coach.

**Customer Service** - “Give ‘Em the Pickle” – Outstanding customer service is our top priority here at the University of Mississippi. This seminar takes a funny, light-hearted approach to customer service training. This seminar is based on a video “Give ‘em the Pickle” by Bob Ferrell.

**Understanding Workgroups** – In today's business culture, many companies are assigning projects to different work groups instead of individuals. This seminar helps participants understand how to effectively work in a group setting, how informal groups form, how to maintain group cohesiveness and, as a supervisor, how to control a disruptive group.

**Effective Delegation** – Delegation is an essential tool for managers; however, it seems to be one of the more difficult lessons to learn. This seminar covers how to effectively delegate, what tasks should be delegated, and finally why should delegation occur.

## **Performance Management**

**How to Conduct Accurate and Effective Performance Appraisals** – Accurately documenting employees' performance is essential. This seminar offers suggestions to ensure that the appraisals that are completed are precise. Participants also learn how to conduct the appraisal “interview” as well as provide routine coaching.

**Motivating Employees** –This seminar provides fun and innovative ways to motivate employees. It is based on a book written by Dr. Stephen Lundin called “Fish.” This book has been on the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, and *Business Week* business best seller lists for more than two years.

### **Implementation:**

In effort to spread the word as quickly as possible to all qualified University employees, HR personnel sent out mass emails to faculty and staff members, as well as spoke to various departmental/divisional meetings. Also, the Human Resources department created a webpage within its departmental website to further explain the details of this program. Applications were received and the selection committee selected the first participants.

### **Benefits:**

The implementation of this plan has created a stronger front line managerial staff, thus, decreasing attrition and creating a highly educated management team who is

capable of stepping into more senior leadership positions. Overall, 25% of the employees who have completed the program have received promotions.

<b>Year of Program</b>	<b>Participants Completing Program</b>	<b>Participants Receiving Promotion</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
2003	19	7	36%
2004	19	5	26%
2005	19	6	31%
2006	19	1	5%

The MASH program is in a state of constant change because evaluations are completed after each program. Human Resources reviews the evaluations to ensure appropriate and effective changes are made the next year based on the participants' feedback. As a result of the enthusiasm for this program, a second program entitled SOAR - Strengthening Ole Miss' Administrator Responsibilities has been created. This program discusses higher-level issues pertaining to budget, research dollars, and general organizational concerns.