

Communications Audit
The Police Training Institute
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This communications audit was conducted in order to look at the current communications climate and its effectiveness at the Police Training Institute. It examines the organizational structure and mission, the recent history of the organization, the communication strategies within a core group of full-time staff, and the communication strategies and needs that the staff utilizes with outside resources, including part-time instructors.

The audit has data compiled from staff interviews and an electronic questionnaire submitted to adjunct instructors. Observations were used to validate the data from the interviews.

The audit revealed that there are two separate work groups at PTI that do not communicate well with each other. The full-time staff have adapted to a serious shortage of staff through a relational strategy of team-work and respect for one another. However, because of the staffing shortage on their end, they are unable to maintain a functional communication with the part-time instructional staff to help provide a consistent product of excellent training to police recruits.

This report discusses the organizational strategies inside PTI and how they affect communication. It also analyzes strengths and weaknesses in the two work groups that help supply training to police recruits. The report ends with recommendations. These recommendations revolve around the need to bring the instructional staff closer to the central communications network of the full-time staff and more effectively prepare all members of PTI for growth in the future.

The report supplement section has the verbatim results of the electronic questionnaire and samples of email communication between the instructional staff and full-time staff.

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THE POLICE TRAINING INSTITUTE: ORGANIZATION, MISSION AND HISTORY

Organization of PTI

The Police Training Institute (PTI) is one of six police academies in the state of Illinois. Each academy competes with the others for recruit officers and funding from the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board (ILETSB), an oversight committee for police training, standards and policy. PTI provides basic police certification training to police and correctional officer recruits, develops and presents specialized courses in firearms and control tactics training for currently certified officers, and conducts research.

The PTI organization is within the University of Illinois reporting structure. The PTI Director has a direct report to the University of Illinois Police Department's Director of Public Safety who, in turn, reports directly to the Administrative Vice Chancellor of the University. The PTI Director also reports to the Executive Director of ILETSB, Kevin McClain.

As a stand-alone organization, PTI has a full time staff comprised of the following: a Director, Dr. Mike Schlosser, a registrar, a operations supervisor/course manager, and a secretary who handles the business functions. The registrar, the course manager, and business secretary report directly to the Director. Part-time adjunct instructors and part-time range staff conduct the majority of the training at PTI. They report directly to the course manager. Within the adjunct instructor corps, there is a very loose hierarchy. Primary Instructors (PIs) supervise the blocks of police recruit instruction. Primary Assistants (PAs) assist with providing instructions and student feedback in training scenarios, work with role players and report to the PIs. The PAs also instruct newer role players in how to interact with the students. Two part-time employees manage the range and report directly to the course manager.

The full-time staff within organization downsized from 14 people its peak in the early 2000s to the current number of four. The PTI director is the only full-time member of PTI who is a member of the instructional staff, but his role in this capacity is part-time. The core instructional staff no longer holds any full-time instructors. The instructional group consists of approximately 150 part-time instructors to handle all of the training modules and scenario role players who help provide recruit officers realistic, simulated training scenarios. See Figure A.

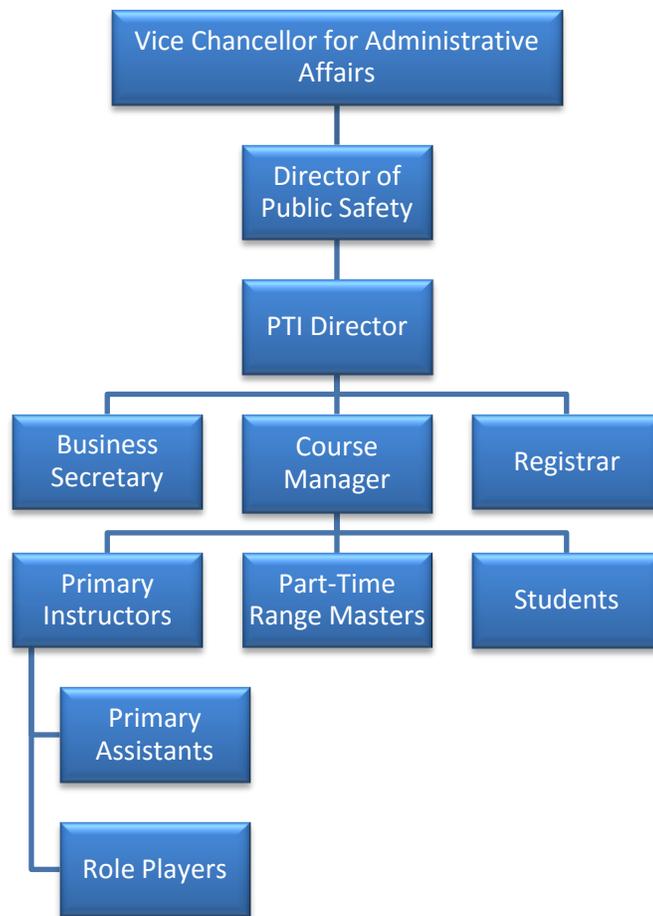


Figure A: Hierarchical structure of PTI within the University of Illinois. The PTI Director also reports to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board as part of an intergovernmental agreement signed in 2012.

Mission of the Police Training Institute

The formal mission of the Police Training Institute, as posted on their website, is as follows, as retrieved from their website (Police Training Institute Mission Statement, n.d.):

The Police Training Institute is a unique member of the University of Illinois campus community combining training and education to provide students with the philosophical base, skills, and decision-making abilities requisite to maintaining an ordered and safe society within the guidelines of the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Illinois. The Police Training Institute will strive constantly to maintain and enhance the quality of its teaching, applied research, and public service. It will fulfill its mission by:

- Enhancing the quality of education and training, applied research, and public service programs through aggressive recruitment and support of the most knowledgeable and experienced instructional staff.
- Maintaining a leadership position in creating new and innovative policing strategies and tactics.
- Continuing to improve our programs through the use of the adult learning model, preparing our students for leadership and citizenship in a changing and increasingly complex profession.
- Integrating the Police Training Institute with the campus community and its many resources in recognition of the benefits of a holistic approach to both the Institute and the campus community. This will enhance services to our client base through education, training, and applied research in partnership with government and community groups.

- Strengthening mutually beneficial relationships while building new ones with communities, governmental entities, alumni, and the private sector.
- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of management and administrative services that support the missions of the University of Illinois and the Police Training Institute

History

Within the last five years, the Police Training Institute has been in a very tumultuous state of operations. It faced closure several times, both by the University of Illinois and the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board. This audit must acknowledge this, as the remaining full-time staff members, as well as several of the adjunct instructors, operate with a very recent memory of this as they move forward from the tumult. According to Conrad and Poole (2012, p. 267), organizational “politics is a central element of virtually all organizational situations. The greatest complication in managing organizational politics is their game-like nature.” From news reports, much of the political wrangling to keep PTI open appeared to be very game-like. Interviews with some staff flushed out a sense of fear about the political process that almost closed PTI. They work hard to keep the doors open, rather than developing more of the community outreach and research that is part of their mission.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been the home of PTI since 1955. PTI enjoyed funding directly from the University of Illinois General Revenue Fund (GRF); the GRF is a funding stream made up of University of Illinois student tuition funds. However, in 2009, the University was reeling from the economic downturn of 2008, as was PTI. Due to the downturn, few municipalities were in a hiring mode. Where PTI consistently had classes as large as 90 students in the early part of the 2000’s and ran eight Basic Law Enforcement courses per year, they saw a graduating class of 12 during 2008 and whittled down the offerings to four

per year. Police recruit tuition funds could not support the operating expenses of PTI, so PTI needed the General Revenue Funds to stay open.

Due to its own economic struggles, the University established the Stewarding Excellence program to deal with the economic problems that it faced. As part of this program, the University conducted audits of units it determined to have weak ties to the University's core educational mission for its undergraduate and graduate students. PTI was one of those units.

The University published the audit in May, 2010. It concluded that, "[t]here is no justification to provide \$900,000 in annual GRF funding to train police officers. This high subsidy necessarily diverts money that is meant for more essential campus priorities. It insulates PTI from becoming a more market-sensitive actor....The Project Team recommends that PTI develop a plan during FY 2011 to become a full-cost recovery unit" (Office of the Provost, Police Training Institute Project Team, 2010, p. 14).

In addition to recommending that the University move quickly away from GRF subsidies for PTI, the audit forced the University to restructure PTI to be under the direction of the University of Illinois Police Department's Director of Public Safety in order to model the institute after the Illinois State Police Academy. The Director of Public Safety took on the additional role of being the Director of PTI. PTI did not become a part of the police department, but shared some of its leadership and business support. The audit also highly recommended a strong tie with ILETSB in order to come up with a sustainable funding stream.

After the publication of the audit, the University made no formal commitment to keep PTI open. In fact, PTI found itself on the chopping block several times, with the University of Illinois Board of Trustees holding the ax. The leadership of PTI believed that they could make the institute a viable business entity to provide training to police recruits without University

subsidies, but the outlook was grim that they would even get a chance to prove this. The PTI leadership worked with the University in making plans for closure, but within their own walls, they continued to work on a business plan to become self-sustaining.

Around the same time that the University defunded PTI, ILETSB was in serious talks with Western Illinois University to open a training and research academy in Macomb, Illinois (Wood, 2010). The executive director of ILETSB, Kevin McClain, did not believe that the Western Illinois academy and PTI could operate at the same time and continued to move towards developing an academy in Macomb. This pursuit made it difficult for PTI to meet the University's audit recommendation that ILETSB and PTI work together to develop a funding stream. A very contentious political struggle occurred from 2010 to 2012, with local legislators and municipalities that utilized the services of PTI taking sides against ILETSB. They also discouraged the University from pulling the plug on the institute until the ILETSB quandary came to a resolution.

In March, 2012, hope quickly dashed for supporters of PTI. The Director, who had been one of their top champions within the University, left the University of Illinois to take a job at the University of Connecticut. Shortly after that, ILETSB surprised many people and decertified all of the training curricula at PTI at the March board meeting. Urbana Mayor Laurel Prussing, who sits on the Training Board, described the decertification decision-making process in this way: "I think they're abusing the power of the board and they're bullying people" (Wade, 2012). This decertification left PTI with no training product to offer police agencies. Believing that PTI would not be able to survive this particular blow, many of PTI's support and instructional staff members accepted the closure plan and left the institute to take on other jobs within the university or at other research institutions.

State legislators saw the decertification as a dirty political move by ILET SB and began to come up with a legislative resolution to keep it open. Western Illinois University was not able to roll out an academy quickly enough to handle the new surge of police recruits that a recovering economy facilitated. The new director of PTI was willing to work with ILET SB rather than fight them in order to keep PTI running. These factors brought ILET SB, the University and PTI back to the table. In July, 2012, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, ILET SB and PTI agreed to keep PTI open through an intergovernmental operating agreement between the University and ILET SB. ILET SB would provide grant funding and PTI would be an entity under ILET SB to conduct training and research. The University of Illinois agreed to continue to house PTI on its campus. Despite the agreement, the specter of closing PTI remains if it cannot prove to be economically viable.

Because the agreement puts PTI into an even-closer working relationship with ILET SB without a funding support from the University, the political and economic history directly affects PTI's internal communications and current operating climate. PTI functions in an agreed-upon network strategy in order to deliver training with two entities that suggested PTI's closure in the past. Internally, the director is moving to change the old traditional system that PTI used to work under into a relational one. He works to balance both strategies to provide the best training to recruits.

COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Purpose of the Communications Audit for the Police Training Institute

A critical look at the communications within an organization can begin to make sense out of given assumptions of an organization – the meaning of certain pieces of information, the expectations that individuals have in an organization, and the processes by which people express

the information and expectations of and about the organization (Conrad & Poole, 2012). An audit of an organization's communication provides a coordinated process in which an organization receives data on its "current behaviors and practices and also the likelihood of future successes and failures" (Goldhaber, 1990, p. 345). An organization that subjects itself to a communications audit provides its members with notice that it cares about the communication process, receives information for the future strategic planning, and has the freedom to choose from different alternatives, based upon accurate data rather than guesswork (Downs & Adrian, 2008; Goldhaber, 1990).

The goals of this audit for the Police Training Institute are to:

- examine the current climate in which members of PTI are communicating;
- identify current communication and organizational strategies that members of PTI use in their interactions both internally and externally;
- provide useful information to PTI about the strengths and weaknesses of those strategies. This information is based upon the data the auditor acquired during the assessment phase of the audit; and
- provide feedback for future communication strategies in order to help PTI methodically plan for future crises that threaten its existence or detract from its educational, community outreach and research missions.

Scope of the Audit

The scope definition of an audit helps create parameters in which an auditor can work. "Since communication is a broad concept, the focal points for an assessment are virtually limitless. Therefore, its scope needs to be clearly defined" (Downs & Adrian, 2004, p. 21). The political history and the state-wide impact of the Police Training Institute on law enforcement

training could expand the scope to involve legislators, lobbyists, Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board members, police chiefs and sheriffs, and police recruits who graduated from the academy during the past few years. However, this would not be a manageable scope for the purposes of this project.

For this audit, a manageable scope covers the central operational staff involved with delivering training, initiating community outreach, and conducting research. Most of the task completion at PTI occurs in a core group of four people. This core maintains communications with outside police agencies, students, instructors, and community members. They achieve delivery of police training through coordinating the activities of part-time adjunct instructors. They also have a part in making PTI available to conduct research. Since part-time adjunct instructors play a key role in delivering training, they are also a part of the training scope.

The audit will examine the internal communication networks between the core staff and instructors. The audit will also have a focus on external communications with respect to the portion of the PTI mission to become a research institute and have better ties to the community.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Survey Methodology

In order to validate the findings of the data collection techniques, the methodology used to audit PTI were observations, interviews and an electronic questionnaire. “The more measure used to collect data, the more reliable are the data; they supplement one another so that the consistency of findings can be tested” (Downs & Adrian, 2004, p. 27). Using three methods to collect data also helped in reaching more people at PTI, as the electronic questionnaire provided distribution to 108 people.

The four full-time staff members agreed to interviews at their workplace. We were able to meet privately in their offices. The director had notified them that the interviews would take place.

Observations occurred inside the office. These task observations were limited to watching how the staff members interacted with each other while planning for a class of 74 students to arrive a week later and a meeting with members from an outside agency.

Interview Questions

The interview questions were guidelines for the interviewer. Interviews occurred in a conversational format around the questions. Each lasted 60 to 90 minutes. When a respondent answered specifically to a question, the interviewer marked the question off as answered. The interviewer would ask specific questions if the conversation moved away from the guideline questions.

- What is PTI's chain of command?
- Are there other entities that affect the chain of command structure?
- What is your position within PTI.
- Please describe your formal job duties as you understand them.
- Please describe other duties you do in your role at PTI.
- With whom do you interact when carrying out your job duties? (If inside and outside units are not mentioned, ask to identify them).
- How do you communicate with each?
- What are the formal and informal channels through which you receive information?
- What communication factors currently work in helping you remain effective in your job?
- What communication factors keep you from being as effective as you would like?

- What is the decision making process for PTI?
- What decisions are you expected to make?
- How do you gain the information to make appropriate decisions?
- What information do you require to get your job done effectively?
 - From whom do you receive this information?
 - How do you usually receive it?
 - How easy/difficult is it to receive this information?
- Are there technologies that you are currently using that help with information exchange?
- Are there technologies that you are currently using that hinder information exchange?
- Are there technologies that you wish you had available to you to facilitate better communication? What are they?
- What are the communication strengths of PTI?
- What are the communication weaknesses?
- Is there anything you would like to add regarding the decision making processes at PTI?
- What are PTI's organizational objectives?
- What strategy does PTI intend to use to reach their objectives?
- What strategy does PTI intend to use to evaluate their target objectives?
- What are your own professional objectives?
- What are your own personal objectives?
- What sort of opportunities have you had to work your own objectives in with PTI?
- How do you evaluate your manager in his willingness to be open to and share new ideas?
- How would you evaluate your manager in his coordination of the work at PTI?
- How would you evaluate your manager in his ability to clarify expectations?

- Describe the communication relationship you have with: the students, your co-workers, your supervisor, adjunct instructors, outside customers?
- How are you made aware as to how your supervisor feels about your work?
- How are you made aware as to how members of police departments feel about your work?
- What causes conflict within PTI's staff structure? How is it resolved?
- How does the physical structure of the PTI affect your communication?
- In which part of the organization would I find the most insight into operations?
- Is there anything else that you believe I should be examining as far as communications?

Electronic Questionnaire:

The electronic questionnaire was administered on a voluntary basis. It was set up in order to capture some information regarding the relationship that the adjunct instructor had with the Police Training Institute, such as how long they have been employed and how many hours they have worked since PTI re-opened. It also captured current the current sworn status of the respondents. The next questions then determined how and from whom the instructors received their information.

- How many years have you worked with the Police Training Institute as a role player or instructor?
- What is your sworn status?
- Since July, 2012, approximately how many hours have you worked at the PTI? (0-60, 60-120, greater than 120 Hours)
- What information have you received from PTI to complete your job effectively as an instructor?

- Please list the job title(s) of those from whom you received the information.
- How do you usually receive the information?

The following questions requested a level of agreement with a statement from the respondent using Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree. After each statement, the respondents had an opportunity to provide more feedback in a narrative. The questions were designed to understand the relationship that the instructors at PTI have with each other and management, as well as create an understanding for the researcher about the information that the instructors receive in order to do their jobs effectively.

- The management of PTI is willing to be open to and share new ideas.
- PTI is well-coordinated in providing me with the information I need to successfully teach new recruit officers.
- PTI's expectations of me as an instructor/role player are clear.
- I have a good working relationship with the other adjunct instructors at PTI.
- I have a good working relationship with the full-time staff at PTI.
- I believe that the relationships that the adjunct instructor group at PTI has with one another is a benefit to the students.
- I am fully aware as to how the course manager feels about my work as an instructor.
- I believe that I am provided enough feedback from others to be an effective instructor.
- I am fully aware of what PTI's educational objectives are.
- I believe that my ideas contribute well to the research and educational objectives of PTI.
- I feel fulfilled coming to work at PTI.
- Technology plays a significant role in effective communication at PTI.

The final three questions provided the researcher with data on both perceived strengths and weaknesses in the communications at PTI. The final question also provided the respondent an open narrative to talk about anything else that the questionnaire may have missed.

- What are the top 3-5 things that PTI does best in communicating with its adjunct instructors?
- What are the top 3-5 things that PTI could improve most upon in communicating with its adjunct instructors?
- Is there anything that you believe this audit should cover as far as communication?

Data Collection Limitations

This particular audit had factors that limited the amount of data collected. The staff had limited availability during the open window for assessment. During the initial contact phase with the Director of the Police Training Institute, it was difficult to arrange a time to talk with him. He works to keep PTI as the top academy choice to which agencies can send their police recruits. He enjoys communicating face-to-face with chiefs and sheriffs, which requires a great deal of travel outside of the Champaign-Urbana area. He also is the lead instructor for all of the control tactics blocks for students, which requires him to be in the classroom. His travel and teaching schedule kept us from a timely meeting to discuss the assessment needs for the audit.

Once established as to how to proceed with research within PTI, the staff had a great deal of difficulty in taking time out of their own schedules for interviews. This difficulty was due to a graduating recruit class, a staffing shortage, and end of fiscal year reports that they needed to submit. Interviews happened with the full-time office staff, but there was no time for further follow-up.

There are no classroom observations towards how students interacted with the instructional staff. The instructional phases of the academy training ended and the police recruits were preparing for their certification exams. The data regarding instructor/student interactions would be scant during this time. A passing grade on the certification exams is required for the police recruits to graduate and work in the field of law enforcement. It would not have been appropriate to enter their classrooms to observe limited interactions, especially since it was during a stressful time that directly affects their employment. Because of these limitations, the only data from the instructional corps comes from the questionnaire and some email correspondence.

Because the Police Training Institute utilizes a large number of part-time adjunct instructors who have full-time jobs outside of PTI, coordinating interviews or a focus group with a sample of them would have been too difficult, given the short time-frame for the audit and the time in which it happened. The registrar reported that she sent 108 electronic surveys to adjunct instructors to complete. This number is different from the interview reported number of 150 instructors. The adjunct instructors had a random gift card drawing incentive to complete the survey. Only a small sample (16) returned the surveys. This sampling will be difficult to numerically validate, as there was only a 14.8% return rate. However, several people took the time to explain their answers and provided positive and negative insight into why they felt the way that they did on the agreement questions. Rather than using numeric data to analyze the results, the questionnaire responses help in providing personal insight from the respondents and give some validation to the information trends that the interviews of the full-time staff provided.

Data Analysis Methods

With the interviews, the data specifically looks at the communication around the tasks that the full time staff has to complete, the decisions that they have to make, their relationships and the environment in which they work. It also takes into account the level of understanding that they have regarding the mission of the Police Training Institute and how they work towards completing the three separate mission pieces of providing training, community outreach and research.

Observation time was relatively scant. The data from observations only helped confirm the information that the respondents provided in their interviews. The behaviors displayed by the full-time staff were very similar to what each had revealed in their interviews.

Because the questionnaires did not have a high response rate, the analysis of the data there will rely heavily on the open-ended input that the respondents provided. Trends in these responses will play a part in the evaluative process from the questionnaire since it is not numerically valid for a full analysis of the data due to the size of the sample.

Summary of Findings

The audit showed that the Police Training Institute uses a relational strategy of organizing within its walls. In order to provide training to police recruits, PTI maintains a networking strategy as it uses outside entities to provide instruction, supplies, billeting and food for recruits, and research. Technology is slowly playing a role in communicating and coordinating. However, its use is currently limited to email and a new phone system that allows workers to instant message one another.

The interviews with full-time staff members enjoy an ease in communicating with each other face-to-face or through email. They work in one building. After the staff reduction, they

took on multiple tasks that more people used to handle. Because they heavily rely upon each other in order to complete these tasks, shared information, a team environment and a flattened hierarchy works well for them.

The questionnaire with the adjunct instructors showed that, though a part of the PTI hierarchy within the organization, the instructors appear to be outsiders when it comes to communication with the organization. They receive formal information through periodic meetings with the director and course manager. They also receive some instruction on completing their job tasks through email. The improved use of technology has managed to better organize communications with the outside adjunct instructor corps, but it is not at an ideal level yet. There appears to be a greater want within the adjunct instructor group to be more of a part of the PTI organization and decision-making process, but the way that the organization is currently structured, this will require more coordination. They also would like more timely feedback from the PTI organization in order to improve their training capabilities of recruits.

Members of the Police Training Institute appear to have a strong understanding about the mission of providing police recruits with a fine training product; there is strong motivation for them to continue to provide this, as the training is revenue-generating and is what will keep the doors of the institute open. Not all of them, however, have a full understanding of the new missions of community engagement and research. Most of the work and communication around these two pieces fall on the director, yet they are important pieces to the intergovernmental agreement between the University and ILETSB.

ANALYSIS: COMMUNICATION METHODS, STRATEGIES, AND NETWORK MAP

Communication Methods Per Major Task

Members of the Police Training Institute utilize face-to-face conversations, instructional meetings with instructors, phone conversations, memos and email to communicate with one another. There is some historic training material that the adjunct instructors rely upon in order to deliver training, but most of their instructions to work in the classroom come from someone who has more experience and it is generally word-of-mouth.

In order to prepare for an upcoming course, the staff uses the following methods:

- They meet in a conference room to discuss logistics and the needs for the upcoming class. They continue to use face-to-face, informal methods throughout the process to acquire supplies, billeting, board, and develop instructor schedules.
- The registrar maintains contact with the police agencies that are sending their recruits to the academy. She does this through email, US Post, and telephone calls.
- The course manager is the main point of contact for incoming police recruits. He maintains contact mainly through telephone calls.

In order to schedule instructors, the following methods are used:

- The course manager and registrar meet together to develop a schedule of instructors.
- The registrar sends instructors a list of teaching assignments through US Post and email. She asks them to contact her if they are unable to teach on their assigned days.
- The registrar then sends a reminder email a week before the instructor's scheduled day.

In order to provide consistent training, PTI uses the following methods:

- The course manager and director hold quarterly meetings for all of the instructor staff to meet and learn about expectations and discuss problems.
- If an immediate change needs to be made, or system-wide problem addressed during the time between the quarterly meetings, the course manager sends an email to all instructors.
- Three senior adjunct instructors are currently working on written documentation for training modules for all of the instructors to follow. Many of the scenarios are old and they are working on standardizing some of the lectures.
- Primary instructors guide primary assistants and role players during the training modules.

Interviews showed that the preferred method of contact with members of the full-time staff is face-to-face contact. Email is a second preferred method of contact. From the questionnaires, instructors seem understanding that personal methods of communication, though preferred, are sometimes not possible due to the small size of the full-time staff. However, they ask for an alternative method of finding out about schedules, training standards and teaching curricula without having to ask the staff, as their requests often take a long time to fill, or go unfulfilled.

Communication and Organizational Strategies

The Police Training Institute utilizes two strong organizational strategies in which people communicate: a networking strategy and a relational strategy. Its adjunct instructor corps has a very loose traditional hierarchy.

The institute relies on various organizations in order to succeed in meeting its promised educational, community outreach, and research targets. It loosely utilizes a networking strategy,

especially in external communications, to obtain certain things that help them run. “Network organizations are aggregates of organizations whose component units are assembled to meet a particular set of demands” (Conrad & Poole, 2012, p. 205). In the case of police training, PTI relies on outside organizations to provide housing, food, and supplies for police recruits. It also relies on outside researchers to come in and conduct research that will help police officers perform more safely in their jobs.

Though the members of the adjunct instructor corps end up being employees of PTI, the nature of this group is that the institute relies on part-time specialists to come in from the outside and deliver training, rather than using internal staff who fully belong to the institute. The questionnaire showed a sense of pride among the adjunct instructional staff to be a part of PTI, but a bit of a disconnect when it comes to the organization itself. The adjunct instructors remain outside of the core communication group, even though they have a hierarchical relationship with the course manager. See Figure B in the next section for a visual representation of this.

In the core group of four full-time staff members, PTI has moved far away from the traditional hierarchy that it once had. In the old traditional system, PTI operated with fourteen staff members and each staff member had a specific role that he or she played. There was a well-defined line of communication in order to reach someone in the hierarchy. Today, with only four full-time staff members, they work together as a team to help deliver the training product. Their job functions blend around different tasks that the staff reduction left. As each person began to take on various tasks that he or she never had to do before the transition, it became necessary for everyone to participate in the tasks. This has become a standard way of operating for the full-time staff. They make decisions in face-to-face conversations with each other. If they are not sure, they feel free to either email or talk directly with the director for guidance.

The change from a traditional strategy to a relational strategy of organizing matches Conrad and Poole's (2012, pp. 114-115) description of the differences between a traditional organizations and relational organizations: "In traditional strategies of organizing centralization and hierarchicalization – the notions that organizations should be shaped like a multilevel triangle and decision making should be located at the top of the triangle – were central concepts... The relational strategy relaxes both assumptions, asserting instead that organizational hierarchies should be 'flattened' and decision making should be decentralized." Where full-time employees used to have to run all decisions up a chain of command, the full-time staff has a great deal of autonomy to make decisions for PTI today.

Much of this change is out of necessity due to the reduction in staff and the amount of work that the director is completing both inside and outside of the PTI. He is not always available to make decisions on everything. The director complements this decentralized decision making with the full-time staff through his own demonstration of transactional leadership. In transactional leadership, "[b]oth parties align themselves with one another; they converge toward the same set of values, are able to solve complex and unprecedented problems together, and have a relaxed, mutually supportive relationship" (Conrad & Poole, 2012, p. 137).

Interviews showed that the director is a supportive leader of the team and is willing to provide the full-time staff with time for training that will help them best complete their jobs. He takes time to learn about their job functions so that he can support them. This involves a great deal of listening to and working directly with the individual person so that he understands the processes that each uses to complete their jobs. When a staff member becomes discouraged, the director is willing to sit in the staff member's office and listen to their needs, then help them obtain the necessary resources. If the resources are not available due to funding, he helps them

directly. This has created an internal trust within this group that they did not enjoy with past directors. One staff member revealed a level of trust in the director that, if the director had to withhold information or did not include staff members in a meeting or process, it would be for a trustworthy purpose rather than a manipulative one. The staff members indicated that this was vastly different from past directors.

Communication Network

The broader communications strategy of the Police Training Institute is a networking strategy. The core group of full-time staff members must coordinate with outside resources to provide training. The adjunct instructors are outside of that core group. They communicate with the course manager and registrar, on a regular basis to get tasks done. The instructors also have a means to communicate directly with the director in meetings, through email, or in the classroom.

The director, the course manager, and the registrar all work with outside police agencies to help keep them in the loop on recruit progress. The director also communicates with various community agencies who want to engage in community programs with PTI, ILETSB for curriculum updates and to maintain the intergovernmental agreement, and his managers at the University. The business secretary is involved in the network when purchases need to be made or payroll needs to be completed.

Though there is a hierarchy within the University, the communications network map is not necessarily hierarchical. Figure B is a network map of internal and external communications.

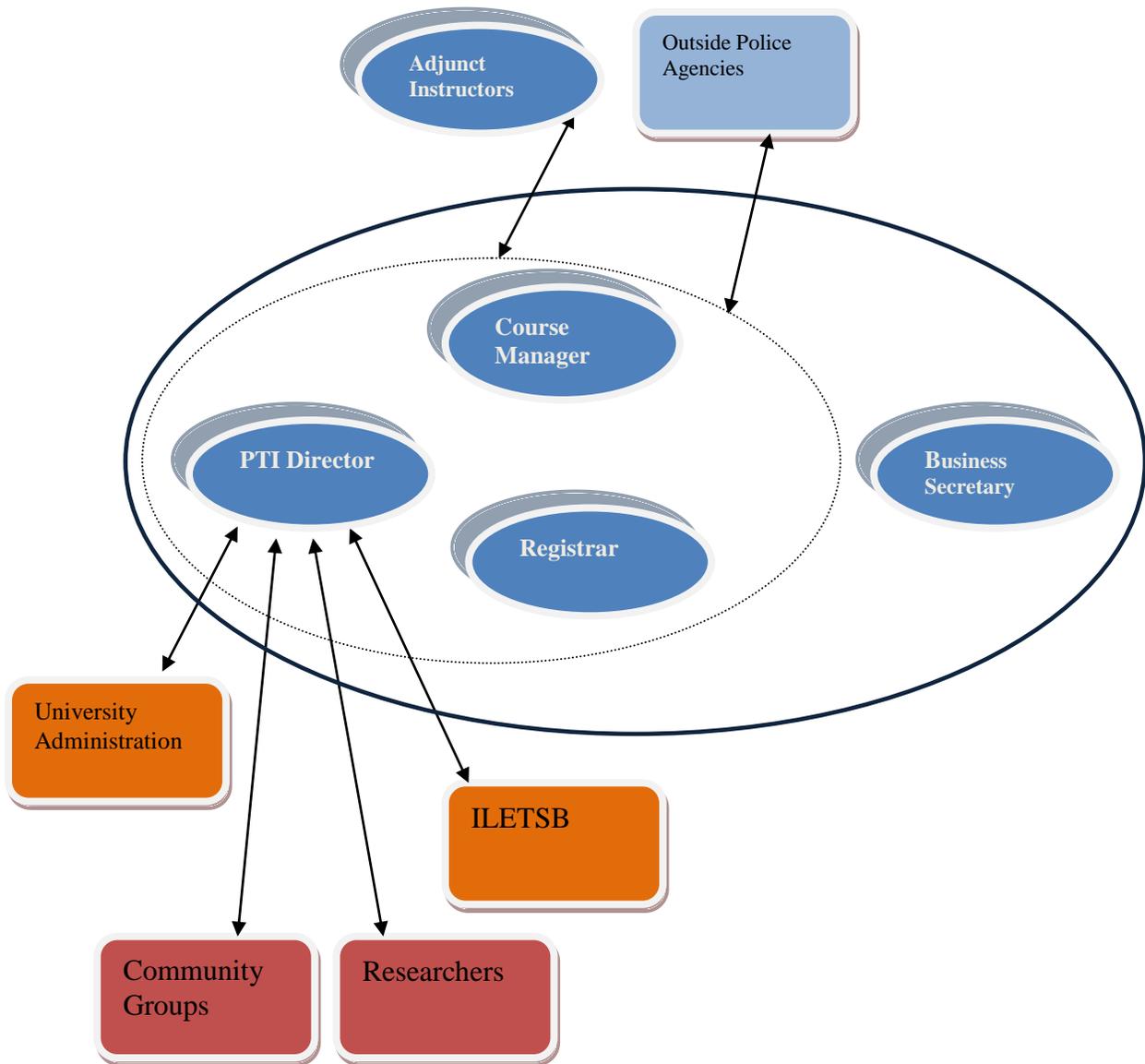


Figure B: The communication network at PTI. The dark circle contains the core group of four full-time staff members who do most of the business at PTI. Blue ovals are those who are members of PTI. The director, registrar and course members have direct responsibility with external communications to police departments that use PTI’s services. The director also has responsibility to communicate with community organizations, ILETSB, University Administration, and researchers utilize PTI as a research institute.

External Communications

The Police Training Institute's external communication is geared towards providing information to police departments and citizens groups who are interested in using PTI’s services. The written and online communication does not work to maintain a consistent relationship with its clients. That function lies mainly with the full-time staff. The external communication

consists mainly of a website (<http://www.pti.illinois.edu>), the director's travels to police departments throughout the state, and a brochure that advertises the Citizen's Police Academy to community members. There is no social media presence. Its alumni association, though they have one, is not active.

The website is information-filled. Some parts of the site serve a function for those students who seek registration or reporting information so that they will not have to make a phone call directly to the registrar. The site has course listings, descriptions and schedules, how to register, where to stay, maps, teaching philosophy, as well as the mission and vision statement. However, the site appears to contain information that makes PTI look like it is not able to keep up with the site itself. It has a law update from 2011 on it, though laws and court cases change often. The director's message is older, as it talks about the reopening of the academy after ILETSB decertified it in 2012. Though the site itself serves a function of information exchange, it does not remain as an active touchstone for officers to utilize as a training resource.

What appears to be one of the most successful pieces of PTI's external communication is the work that the director has done in making personal contact with police departments throughout the state. From 2008 to 2010, PTI saw a sharp decline in the number of recruits who went through the courses. Dr. Schlosser, upon taking the director's position in 2012, made a concerted effort to work directly with police chiefs and managers in keeping PTI as their first choice in police recruit training. The last three basic recruit classes had attendance of over 40 students each; the attendance continues to rise. Several new agencies on board have sent their recruits to the academy, as well as agencies that had not sent recruits since before the drastic decline in attendance.

In maintaining contact with outside police agencies, PTI utilizes face-to-face meetings, email, and phone calls. PTI also uses a strategy that allows members of police agencies to visit the academy in order to understand its inner workings and training philosophy. If there are problems with a police recruit that require employer intervention, the director will make a direct phone call to a chief. The staff members use email to send progress reports. The director encourages police agencies to be a part of the recruit officer's team throughout the training process. This also appears to be a manifestation of his relational strategy.

STRENGTHS IN COMMUNICATION:

Even with the staff reduction, the Police Training Institute appears to have improvement in communications with both the full-time staff and formalizing communication strategies with adjunct instructors. These strengths help PTI operate on a day-to-day basis.

Full-Time Staff

The main points of strength in communication among the full-time staff are the following:

- The director fosters a relational strategy inside and outside of the Police Training Institute.
- The full-time staff are beginning to take hold of the relational strategy of leadership that the director fosters.
- There is a level of respect and understanding amongst staff members for each other's skills, knowledge, and experience in running PTI and they are willing to rely on those strengths.

- The director is willing to include affected members in decision-making processes and to initiate communication with anyone who might fall outside of the full-time staff group.

The overriding strength in communication within the Police Training Institute is with the relational strategy of leadership that the director fosters among the full-time staff. Conrad and Poole (2012) suggest that an organization in a “locally stormy” environments adopt a relational strategy, and those in turbulent times adopt a networking strategy. PTI has both. Internally, however, the PTI could be categorized as “locally stormy.” The full-time staff will not find themselves unemployed within the University system should PTI close. They simply have to adapt to change.

Interviews indicate that, had the director adhered to the traditional strategies of his predecessors at the worst crisis time for the institute, PTI would not be in existence today. He fosters a level of trust and teamwork among the full-time staff that has created a functional working environment, even during the most desperate staffing time. Because of the history with the various entities that could have closed PTI, the staff members enjoy working in a trusting, collaborative environment.

The director’s strategy also works outside the walls of PTI in his work with various community groups, police agencies, ILETSB and research institutions to help fulfill the other two parts of the PTI mission, community outreach and research. PTI has experienced an increase in the number of students to a maximum number of 74 in 2013 and new agencies are on board in sending their recruits there. He has also attracted a number of researchers who will use the facility to do research on behavioral and stress reactions, thereby fulfilling ILETSB’s mission that PTI become a research institution.

The full-time staff members witness this and work on practicing the relational strategy. One of the principles for team effectiveness is having “a collaborative climate, characterized by open communication operating on the following principles: honesty...willingness to share and receptivity to ideas, opinions, and positions; consistency in behavior; and respectful and dignified treatment of all people” (Conrad & Poole, 2012, p. 131). Interviews showed that staff members were quite proud of the fact that they could easily work together and collaborate on problems in a way that that past directors did not foster. Because of the increased amount of work that each person has to accomplish, there is greater willingness to put one’s own wants aside in order to respectfully help another. One staff member reported that, each “has to respect each other’s time” when dealing with issues. The staff member explained that she loves getting answers right away. However, she fully understands that there are time constraints and prioritizes the questions for others based on what needs to be answered right away versus what can wait in order to help the others.

Another key component to team effectiveness is “competent team members who have technical knowledge and skills necessary for the team’s work” (Conrad & Poole, 2012, p. 131). The interviews revealed a respect for the knowledge and understanding that the fellow teammates carried in their jobs. Their experience in handling different aspects of the operations over the years played heavily into this mutual respect. In addition, each full-time staff member feels the freedom to pursue training that will help them make better decisions for PTI.

Interviews indicated that communication is at its best among the full-time staff when there is a project that brings them all together, such as putting together logistics for a new class. They come together in a room with pen and paper and talk about their needs. Their job functions overlap for these projects and they enjoy the meetings in which they get things done. One staff

member has a very different job function than three others and does not have the opportunity to work as collaboratively as the rest do on a daily basis. However, the director works with her by meeting with her several times during the week and listening to what she needs to get her job accomplished, then providing her with the appropriate opportunities.

Observations showed that information gathering and problem solving is a group process in which others are willing to help. In one meeting with a police department, the director, the business secretary and course manager had determined that PTI was not renting out facilities appropriately. There were also questions regarding some of the policies that helped dictate the facility rental. Rather than meeting with the director only, the director assembled those staff members impacted by any new changes so that they could be in the conversation with the outside agency. Each member helped clarify expectations with the police department and the session appeared helpful to the police department representatives and the staff members.

Adjunct Instructors

In the questionnaire, the adjunct instructors reported to have benefited from the increased number of meetings that the director and course manager have with them. When there were fewer adjunct instructors, a larger full-time staff to coordinate them, and more opportunities to interact with members of PTI, the opportunity to participate in informal channels of communication was greater, so they were able to feel that they were better informed. The validity of the information varied, however, because the channels were so informal. The director uses the quarterly meetings as a formal channel of communication to coordinate the training activities of all the instructors and impart PTI's expectations on them.

Using email communications with 150 instructors has provided a time-saver for full-time staff to disseminate a large amount of information quickly to the adjunct instructors. Should

instructors save these emails, it also provides them with historic information to which they can refer back. From the questionnaire responses, the adjunct instructors appreciate this type of communication.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN COMMUNICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Full-time staff

Though there is great strength in the communication between the full-time staff, there are still strategic improvements that PTI can make with them. They are:

- Specifically train the instructors on the components, benefits and needs of a relational strategy of organizational communication.
- Develop a team integration piece for a new employee who becomes full-time staff. This may include training on specific tasks. This will help develop a baseline for the skills and competencies for a new person who joins.

Trust in the change process is still developing. In the interviews, the staff members continued to make sense of this new strategy through a bureaucratic hierarchy, rather than from a team philosophy. This revealed some feelings of unease with their own roles in decision making processes. One staff member showed a little hesitancy towards the new freedom to make autonomous decisions because of a write-up prior to the shift to the new strategy for making a decision without checking. This staff member also wondered how a flattened decision-making process might lead to poor business practices without a hierarchical checks-and-balance system in place.

Specific training on the relational strategy may help the staff make sense of the new expectations within PTI and free them to make decisions without hesitancy. With the past turmoil, staff members do not fully trust the processes outside of PTI. When asked what the

mission of PTI is, the answer, “to stay open,” was the first thing that popped out on a couple of interviews, versus the formal mission statement. The feeling of safety and trust that they enjoy with the director, combined with an exact understanding of his communication and leadership strategy, may allay some of those fears.

Another issue with this strategy that may crop up in the future for the staff members is the potential for growth in the organization. The questionnaire, interviews and observations did show that the staff size is currently too small to handle all of the tasks at an optimum level of efficiency. However, the full-time staff team works very well together. Any person who is brought in to increase efficiency will have to prove him or herself to be a competent member of the team. “All the participants must have expertise and information relevant to the problems being discussed” (Conrad & Poole, 2012, p. 116). Interviews showed that bringing in another person will require training to create this competency and expertise within the organization, but that there fear that there is no time to come up with this training and impart this expertise about the organization onto a new person. The staff members have a willingness to do the work that they understand, but another person may upset the balance that they have acquired.

Adjunct Instructors

The questionnaire and interviews indicate a need for more coordinated communications with the adjunct instructors. Problems and areas of improvement are:

- The corps is very large to manage and they lost their informal communication system when PTI diluted the work opportunities in order to give more instructors experience.
- Personal interactions are too time-consuming for the staff to maintain with the adjunct instructors.

- PTI has no centralized location from which the instructional corps can obtain information on how to be better instructors. They need to seek the information directly from the staff members who cannot generally produce this in a timely fashion.
- Feedback on their performance as instructors is not timely.

The adjunct instructor staff consists of 150 members. Some have been at PTI for many years. PTI hired many just within the last year. Formal communication strategies for this group have improved from the past, though they appear to be missing some of the informal relationships that they had when PTI was operating with full classes for eight classes a year. Full classes, full time instructors, and fewer part time instructors meant that they had time to meet at PTI to develop relationships with one another. This created a denser and closer communication network for the instructors. However, the group size increased to a level that may not be manageable with the current system of communication. As PTI works to provide a greater number of instructors exposure to training blocks in order to prepare for future growth, which means more instructors are teaching fewer hours. PTI's strategy is diluting the opportunity for individual instructors to be at PTI and communicate with one another or the administration in an informal, relational way.

If an instructor wants to obtain information, personal contact with the course manager or registrar generally is necessary. This happens through email, a meeting or a phone call. With the time constraints on the full-time staff, this puts strain on the staff and the adjunct instructor's receipt of information is delayed. The full-time staff enjoy face-to-face meetings with one another to complete their tasks. With 150 instructors, this is not possible to do in an efficient way. One instructor wrote, "Basically, since the drawdown and lack of [full time] positions in

the various divisions there has been and still is a sense that PTI is ‘a ship without a captain.’ There is little direct communication with [administration] anymore.” Another instructor wrote, “The full time staff are so over worked they are hard to get a hold of. When you do get a hold of them they seem stressed and hurried.” At least two separate instructors indicated that PTI develop their website to include an area where they can view items such as their schedules, training materials, and complete time sheets.

The questionnaire responses indicate that the instructors notice a reduced consistency in the teaching process and that there is little time allotted for them with the core group of staff members. Occasional meetings and increased information exchange through email are improvements to the formal communication system. However, the information that they receive regarding feedback from students is not timely. One instructor suggested a greater frequency of meetings so that they could get timely feedback. Another instructor requested notification right away of negative feedback. There is formal evaluation by PTI for its instructors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based upon the analysis, the following items are recommended to help communications at the Police Training Institute:

- Maintain the current relational strategy for the small full-time staff group.
- Train the current staff specifically on the components, benefits and needs of a relational strategy of organizational communication since they worked so long under a traditional hierarchy.
- Develop training for new members of PTI, especially those who will join the full-time staff.

- Work to bring the instructional staff closer to the central core of communications with the staff.
 - Develop a central depository of information that the instructional staff can access at any time. This could be done through the web.
 - Find a way to whittle the instructional corps down to a more manageable size while class offerings still number four in a year. Though growth is possible in the future, the adjunct instructor group is far too large to maintain functional communications with the very small staff.
 - Increase the number of formal face-to-face meetings between instructors and staff members. This could be in a monthly debrief or training session. Because of the diluted opportunities, this may provide them with more time to develop their own informal communication system that fits into the relational strategy the full-time staff enjoys.
 - Maintain the use of email to provide information to instructors.
 - Develop an evaluation system for instructors so that they understand their own developmental needs, as well as communicate the needs of the organization.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Questionnaire Format and Results:

Communications Audit Survey - Adjunct Instructors

The PTI strives to grow as both a teaching and research institution for police training and research. The purpose of this audit is to provide the Police Training Institute critical feedback on its internal and external communication processes to assist with this growth. This survey is part of the audit process.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and is not required as part of your employment with the institute. Your feedback will remain anonymous, but the information you provide will combine with others' to give a critical look at the communications within PTI.

Some of the questions in the survey are about your communication experience with the PTI. Other questions ask for your level of agreement with statements regarding your experiences as an instructor at PTI. Other questions ask for feedback on what members of PTI do best in communicating, or what needs improvement.

The survey should take approximately 15-45 minutes to complete, depending on how much information you choose to provide. You will be able to save this to complete at another time, should you not be able to complete the survey in one sitting. You are not obligated to answer every question.

I will develop a final audit report. The report will provide feedback to PTI management regarding the areas of communication upon which PTI can build upon or improve as it continues to grow. This audit will be partially based upon the information I receive from respondents to this survey.

For those respondents who would like to be part of the drawing for the gift card: you will have instructions on how to enter the drawing upon submission of the survey. Your entry for the drawing will not be linked directly to this survey.

Thank you very much for your input. Your participation is valued and appreciated.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

--Joan Fiesta

Phone: 217-202-xxxx Email: jfiesta@zagmail.gonzaga.edu

1. How many years have you worked with the Police Training Institute as a role player or instructor?
2. What is your sworn status?

	Percent	Count
Sworn, currently employed with a police agency	63%	10
Retired Sworn	13%	2
Civilian, employed with a police agency	0%	0
Civilian, not employed with a police agency	25%	4

3. Since July, 2012, approximately how many hours have you worked at the PTI?

	Percent	Count
Less than 60 Hours	63%	10
60 – 120 Hours	31%	5
More than 120 Hours	6%	1

4. What information have you received from PTI to complete your job effectively as an instructor?
5. Please list the job title(s) of those from whom you received the information.
6. How do you usually receive the information?
7. The management of PTI is willing to be open to and share new ideas.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	0%	0
Disagree (2)	6%	1
Neutral (3)	6%	1
Agree (4)	13%	2
Strongly Agree (5)	75%	12
Average Result	4.56	

8. PTI is well-coordinated in providing me with the information I need to successfully teach new recruit officers.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	6%	1
Disagree (2)	13%	2
Neutral (3)	19%	3
Agree (4)	13%	2
Strongly Agree (5)	50%	8

Average Result	3.88
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9. PTI's expectations of me as an instructor/role player are clear.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	6%	1
Disagree (2)	0%	0
Neutral (3)	0%	0
Agree (4)	25%	4
Strongly Agree (5)	69%	11
Average Result	4.50	

10. I have a good working relationship with the other adjunct instructors at PTI.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	0%	0
Disagree (2)	0%	0
Neutral (3)	6%	1
Agree (4)	31%	5
Strongly Agree (5)	56%	9
Average Result	4.53	

11. I have a good working relationship with the full-time staff at PTI.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	6%	1
Disagree (2)	6%	1
Neutral (3)	6%	1
Agree (4)	6%	5
Strongly Agree (5)	75%	12
Average Result	4.38	

12. I believe that the relationships that the adjunct instructor group at PTI has with one another is a benefit to the students.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	6%	1
Disagree (2)	6%	1
Neutral (3)	13%	2
Agree (4)	6	1
Strongly Agree (5)	69%	11
Average Result	4.25	

13. I am fully aware as to how the course manager feels about my work as an instructor.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	0%	0
Disagree (2)	19%	3
Neutral (3)	31%	5
Agree (4)	19%	3
Strongly Agree (5)	31%	5
Average Result	3.63	

14. I believe that I am provided enough feedback from others to be an effective instructor.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	0%	0
Disagree (2)	19%	3
Neutral (3)	19%	3
Agree (4)	31%	5
Strongly Agree (5)	31%	5
Average Result	3.75	

15. I am fully aware of what PTI's educational objectives are.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	0%	0
Disagree (2)	6%	1
Neutral (3)	0%	0
Agree (4)	25%	4
Strongly Agree (5)	69%	11
Average Result	4.56	

16. I believe that my ideas contribute well to the research and educational objectives of PTI.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	13%	2
Disagree (2)	6%	1
Neutral (3)	13%	2
Agree (4)	38%	6
Strongly Agree (5)	31%	5
Average Result	3.69	

17. I feel fulfilled coming to work at PTI.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	6%	1
Disagree (2)	0%	0
Neutral (3)	0%	0
Agree (4)	38%	6
Strongly Agree (5)	56%	9
Average Result	4.38	

18. Technology plays a significant role in effective communication at PTI.

	Percent	Count
Strongly Disagree (1)	6%	1
Disagree (2)	6%	1
Neutral (3)	13%	2
Agree (4)	19%	3
Strongly Agree (5)	56%	9
Average Result	4.13	

19. What are the top 3-5 things that PTI does best in communicating with its adjunct instructors?

20. What are the top 3-5 things that PTI could improve most upon in communicating with its adjunct instructors?

21. Is there anything that you believe this audit should cover as far as communication?

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