SONORAN UNIVERSITY
OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Talent Development

1. **POLICY STATEMENT/PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish a comprehensive, equitable, and future-focused talent development framework that supports staff development, institutional excellence, and employee engagement. This policy also supports succession planning efforts by strengthening staff capabilities, building future leadership capacity, and ensuring institutional continuity.

This new policy integrates national best practices in higher-education HR, including:

- Regular feedback through coaching conversations
- Focus on well-being, inclusion, and belonging
- Leadership accountability
- Professional growth and capability development
- Coaching conversations are a two-way dialogue with shared ownership between managers and employee for preparation, engagement, and follow-through

The University is committed to fostering a culture of clarity, connection, and growth through structured staff coaching, ongoing dialogue, and transparent performance expectations.

2. **HISTORY/BACKGROUND**

Sonoran University is committed to fostering a work environment where employees feel supported, developed, and meaningfully engaged. Results from Gallup engagement surveys indicated that employees would benefit from more regular feedback, increased clarity, and enhanced support. In response, Coaching Conversations were introduced as a strategic tool to strengthen clarity, alignment, and support for staff.

The Coaching Conversations framework is grounded in Gallup principles and is designed to promote clear expectations, meaningful support, alignment on priorities, and direct, kind, and transparent feedback on the work that matters most.

Clear, consistent communication significantly decreases conflict, confusion, and frustration. Managers experience fewer escalations and interventions. Regular supportive dialogue builds trust and strengthens relationships. Employees

benefit from more open communication, greater cooperation, and higher team morale.

The Coaching Conversations guidelines and form were originally created and introduced in 2023. Beginning in fiscal year 2025–26, two coaching conversations per year became mandatory for all staff. During these conversations, employees meet with their managers to discuss key topics that directly impact their work. This approach reflects evolving best practices in higher education and ensures staff receive consistent, timely support in a rapidly changing environment. Also, in fiscal year 2025-2026 managers received communication training (Radical Candor Masterclass) to support them as they carried out coaching conversations.

3. **DEFINITION(S)**
    a. **Coaching Conversations-** Structured, future-focused discussions between employee and manager that support performance, well-being, clarity of duties and core value behaviors, and overall development.
    b. **Staff employee-** benefits eligible, non-faculty personnel who support the operations, administration, and services of the university.
    c. **Manager-** Any individual with supervisory responsibility for staff performance, coaching, and development.

4. **SCOPE/KEY STAKEHOLDERS**
    This policy applies to all staff employees and their managers.

5. **POLICY ITEMS**
    a. Talent is developed through coaching conversations between managers and employees. These conversations are intended to be collaborative, forward-looking, and focused on prioritization, support, and growth.
    b. Two coaching conversations per fiscal year are mandatory. The University acknowledges that setting aside 30 minutes for a coaching conversation may be challenging. Accordingly, managers may fulfill this requirement by incorporating the conversation into an already scheduled one-on-one meeting.
    c. Each Coaching Conversation addresses the following:
    Core Duties & Responsibilities
        1. Managers and employees discuss main duties and responsibilities and identify their level of performance on the rating scale. This provides employees with clear feedback on their performance and lays the groundwork for future growth.
        The rating scale (Learning → Competent → Proficient → Expert) is utilized to clearly communicate if the employee is learning their

main duties, competent in performing their core duties, proficient in their core duties, or excellent in performing their core duties.

Core Values, Inclusivity & Cultural Behaviors

1. Manager and employee discuss how the employee contributes to core values and professional conduct and collaborative behaviors and identify their level of core value behaviors on the rating scale. This provides employees with clear feedback on their performance and lays the groundwork for future growth.
2. The rating scale (Learning → Competent → Proficient → Expert) is utilized to clearly communicate if the employee is learning core value behaviors, competent in core value behaviors, proficient, or excellent in core value behaviors.

Well-Being, Workload & Support Needs

As part of the coaching conversation managers and employees will discuss what support is needed. Managers and employees will openly review current workload, stressors, and any risks of burnout to ensure work remains manageable and sustainable. This conversation also includes identifying the specific tools, resources, training, and systems the employee needs to thrive in their role. By intentionally exploring what may be missing or creating barriers, the coaching process directly supports the Gallup engagement question, *"I have the materials and equipment I need to do my job,"* ensuring employees feel equipped, supported, and able to perform their work effectively. This alignment reinforces the University's commitment to creating an environment where employees have what they need—both materially and structurally—to be successful.

Progress Since Last Conversation

Employee and manager review of commitments, accomplishments, barriers, and insights that were recorded during the last coaching conversation.

Rocks /Goals (specific, measurable, realistic, timebound)

1. 3–5 measurable rocks/goals with clear timelines and success indicators
2. Alignment with department and institutional priorities

Learning, Skills, & Future Capability Development

1. Identification of skills needed for upcoming projects, future roles, and institutional needs. Both manager and employee contribute to this discussion.
2. Connection to HR's training and development resources on MySonoran HR page.

Manager Commitments & Follow-Up

1. Documented actions the manager will take

d. Coaching conversations must be fair, unbiased, based on observed behaviors and results, data supported through measurable goals, and aligned with institutional values and priorities.
e. Managers are accountable for conducting two coaching sessions per fiscal year, providing coaching and support, following through on commitments, and documenting performance accurately.

6. RESONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Human Resources

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Coaching Conversations Microsoft form, Coaching Conversations guidelines on MySonoran HR page. Training and Development Resources on MySonoran HR page.

8. NEXT REVIEW DATE

Bi-annual or as needed

9. POLICY AUTHOR/CONTACT

Director, Human Resources

10. REFERENCES

Include if applicable.

11. VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Date Approved	Date Effective	Amendment Information
1	Human Resources	3/23/26	3/23/26	New departmental policy
2				
3				