

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

---

## Affinity Network Handbook



## Staff/Faculty Affinity Networks

The University of Hartford and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement are committed to inclusion and belonging as core guiding principles. A key way of advancing these principles is by supporting the formation of employee-led affinity networks, providing access to modest funds, and offering support and strategic guidance when feasible or desired.

The guidelines and procedures provided in this handbook, are intended to provide general information for Affinity Networks at the University.

Through participation in Affinity Networks, staff and faculty help to foster a positive work environment, provide connections across campus to build community, and help to improve our campus culture and climate.

Please note that this is a living document, which will be reviewed and revised continually and is subject to change. If you need additional information or have questions, please contact the Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement and/or Human Resources Development.

### **Christine Grant**

Assistant Vice President, Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement  
Office of the President  
[cgrant@hartford.edu](mailto:cgrant@hartford.edu) or 860-768-4220

### **Lisa Coté**

Assistant Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement  
[licote@hartford.edu](mailto:licote@hartford.edu) or 860-768-4932

### **Jen Conley**

Director, Human Resources Development  
Office of Human Resources Development  
[jconley@hartford.edu](mailto:jconley@hartford.edu) or 860-768-4665

## **Mission**

Employee participation Affinity Networks is encouraged to provide opportunities for individuals to become more involved in campus life and to foster a culture of respect, inclusion and belonging. This purpose reflects the intentions of the UHart Strategic Action Plan to promote a vibrant, diverse, inclusive, and socially just community for all.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement in collaboration with Human Resource Development created Affinity Networks to coordinate and assist individuals in making connections across campus to build supportive safe havens, grow interests, hatch ideas, and spotlight achievements and accomplishments to improve University recruitment, retention, campus climate and culture.

**Affinity Networks** are voluntary, employee-led and -facilitated networks formed around shared identities, interests, backgrounds, and the common goals of building community and fostering inclusion and awareness in the broader campus community.

Affinity Networks do not exclude on the basis of sex, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, mental illness or ability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, sex characteristics, religious creed, or individual political opinions.

Employees (faculty and staff) may use these safe spaces to support, understand, share resources, and to connect with diverse members of the University of Hartford across colleges, units, or job classifications.

Each Affinity Network determines its own mission and goals. To receive support and recognition from the University and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement, a network should be:

- Open to all UHart employees (staff and faculty)
- Participation is completely voluntary
- Promote diversity, openness, awareness, inclusiveness, and belonging
- Adhere to the University of Hartford's policies and procedures

## **Key Affinity Network Objectives:**

1. Build and Create a Sense of Community
  - Play a role in fostering a welcoming community of support, respect and advancement
  - Serve as a vehicle for leveraging the unique and common perspectives
  - Create a space with staff and faculty to meet and support personal professional and mentoring opportunities
  - Promote and celebrate University of Hartford staff and faculty contributions and achievements
2. Advocate for and Support the Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of Faculty and Staff
  - Assist the University in the area of recruiting, retaining, and engaging employees
  - Support the growth and professional development of staff and faculty
  - Advocate for policies and procedures that are equitable for network members

3. Network and Collaborate
  - Provide opportunities for social and professional networking between staff and faculty.
  - Be a collective voice for the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice

### **Affinity Network Leadership Team Expectations:**

Each Affinity Network should have a defined Leadership Team, which will:

- Lead and oversee the functioning of the network. Leaders help ensure that the established guidelines for the Affinity Networks are operational and outcomes are successful and aligned to their established mission.
- Act as the main contact between the Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the affinity network members.
- Organize and implement two (2) meetings each semester, at minimum. The details of which should be communicated with the Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity Inclusion.
- Understand and uphold University branding.

### **Affinity Network Operating Guidelines:**

1. Members must be employed by the University of Hartford.
2. Membership and participation in Affinity Networks shall be entirely voluntary.
3. University of Hartford officers, administrators, anyone in a supervisory capacity, or members of the group may NOT coerce an employee into joining or participating.
4. Membership and participation in Affinity Networks must be open to any and all interested employees.
5. Any program sponsored by an Affinity Network must have a financial plan to support the activity.
6. Affinity Networks are not intended to and shall not duplicate or replace the activities of the recognized bargaining units at the University.
7. Employees may join as many Affinity Networks as they wish.
8. All Affinity Networks meetings are considered University of Hartford sponsored activities. Affinity Network members are eligible to request for release time to attend network meetings up to two (2) hours monthly. Additional release time requests may be considered and granted at the discretion of the supervisor.

### **Meeting Guidelines**

1. Affinity Networks must hold at least two (2) meetings each semester.
2. Meetings are encouraged to have an agenda and to make decisions based on consensus.

3. All marketing and promotional materials must be shared with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement.
4. Leaders of new Affinity Networks are required to attend an orientation prior to the first official meeting.
5. The University logo is the strongest link to our brand. It is important to use only approved logos in all communications. Please refer to the University brand guidelines located on the website.

### **Funding:**

At the discretion of the leadership of the University, and with the approval of University's Chief Financial Officer, approved Affinity Networks will obtain limited funding of \$250 each academic year.

- Leadership teams are required to keep track and produce accurate record of expenditures. When a purchase is made, leaders must submit original receipts and proper paperwork for reimbursement in a timely manner to Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
  - Purchases \$25 and under, leaders should complete a petty cash voucher.
  - Purchases over \$25, leaders must complete a Travel Expense Voucher (TEV) and submit.
  - If an Affinity Network group dissolves, the University of Hartford will not be responsible for any debts incurred by the Affinity Network.

### **Dissolving Affinity Networks:**

An Affinity Network may be dissolved when:

1. The group chooses to dissolve itself. Such dissolution should be reported to the Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
2. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement concludes that the network no longer has clear relevance, has become insufficiently accountable for its activities, or presents a legal or ethical liability to the University of Hartford.

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

## Affinity Network Proposal

1. Proposed name of your Affinity Network:
2. Name (s) of leadership team (at least two required) with contact information:
3. **A Description** – a brief statement of who the Affinity Network will represent and what it strives to accomplish.
4. **Value proposition** – clearly define what members will gain from participation in the proposed affinity network.

### Application Approval

Following the successful submission and review of the application, the leadership team will be contacted by Assistant Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to discuss next steps.

I understand that membership and participation are voluntary and the group must be open to everyone.

As a leader, you play a vital role in ensuring an inclusive campus environment where all are valued, included, and empowered to succeed

Applicant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Send questions or requests for more information regarding your Affinity Network application to Christine Grant (cgrant@hartford.edu) and Lisa Coté (licote@hartford.edu).*