

Onboarding Ambassador Program

The onboarding ambassador program is a great tool that can help a new employee feel welcome and understand PCC's organizational culture and politics quickly. The program is a **volunteer-based best practice**. These are guidelines for departments to connect new employees with an 'onboarding ambassador' to help them navigate PCC, their position, department, culture and norms.

Onboarding ambassador program outline

- The program is volunteer-based.
- At this time, the hiring manager / onboarding lead is encouraged to implement the onboarding ambassador system by electing and pairing an onboarding ambassador from their area with a new employee prior to their start date.
- The onboarding ambassador cannot be the employee's supervisor.
- The program commitment is short-term (the new employee's first 3 months or so, or as determined by the ambassador and the new employee).
- Conversations between the ambassador and the new employee are intended to build a trusting relationship and to remain confidential.
- These are simply guidelines. Once assigned, it will be primarily up to the ambassador and the new employee to decide how often to meet and how best to make a connection.

What's an onboarding ambassador?

- An onboarding ambassador is someone who partners with a new employee during the transition into their new workplace and meets with them regularly with two goals in mind:
 - To be a point of contact and support for general questions regarding day-to-day operations beyond what the manager or team can provide (i.e. Where should I park? Who do I ask about xyz?)
 - To offer guidance and share experiences that help the new employee integrate into the department by being familiar with its culture, attitudes, and expectations and guidelines

Goals and objectives

- **Create a welcoming environment**
 - The ambassador helps new employees feel at ease and connected to the community through building work relationships right away
- **Boost the new employee's confidence**
 - Through offering quick and timely support, the ambassador helps assimilate new employees into the work culture by allowing them to ask questions and sharing experiences about how they found success while navigating the work climate
- **Increase productivity**
 - The ambassador helps new employees learn the systems and processes more quickly through regular assistance and guidance
- **Improve employee retention**
 - The ambassador helps employees feel valued and a part of the team

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Who should be a new hire ambassador?

Here are some characteristics to look for when selecting an ambassador:

- **Wants to be an ambassador and is willing to help others**
 - It's ok for people to turn down the opportunity to become an ambassador. Forcing ambassadors to participate can have an unintended impact.
- **Has been with PCC 6+ months**
 - The ambassador should have enough time with the team to understand departmental practices and culture
- **Good interpersonal skills**
 - Good ambassadors can communicate effectively and use active listening to understand the new hire's needs
- **Friendly, patient, and available**
 - The ambassador will be fielding frequent questions from the new hire. It's important to select someone who has the bandwidth, availability, and patience to support them
- **Skilled or knowledgeable in the new hire's position**
 - The ambassador should be somewhat familiar with the new employee's job duties
- **Enjoys working at PCC and is committed to its vision and values**
 - Ambassadors can help facilitate the new hire's engagement and connection to the department's mission
- **Is not the employee's manager**

Suggestions for the onboarding ambassador

- Review the [Onboarding Ambassador Action List](#) and make sure to check off each item
- On the new hire's first day, we recommend the following:
 - Meet with the new hire on their first day and have your first ambassador session
 - Set up regular meetings with the new hire for their first 3 months
 - Walk the new hire to their scheduled activities on their first day and week's agenda
- Be respectful
 - Be mindful of the new employee's [pronouns](#) and other intersectional identities
- Keep it confidential
 - Maintain a trusting relationship by not sharing or reporting what you discuss with anyone unless requested by the new hire
- Make the new hire feel welcomed
 - You can help develop the new employee's sense of belonging immediately by being supportive, welcoming, and attentive right from the start
- Ambassadors aren't supposed to be experts
 - It's ok to refer a new hire's questions to someone else
- Relationships aren't immediate
 - Some new hires won't develop relationships immediately. Be patient and available
- Take it slow
 - Don't overwhelm the new hire with information and processes. Allow them to make a slow, steady transition into their new role
- Take time to listen
 - Create a healthy working relationship by using what the new hire says to adjust. Learn what motivates them
- Learn new ideas
 - Our new hires bring a wealth of ideas and experience. Consider this a give-and-take learning relationship
- Remain positive
 - Critiquing the department's culture, manager, or colleagues could make the new hire uncomfortable and question their decision to accept the job

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How much time should the ambassador system take?

- The ambassador relationship should last for the first 3 months or so of the new hire's job, with the most interactions happening during the new hire's first month. Frequency of meetings can taper off as the new hire becomes more integrated into their role and understanding of cultural norms.

What happens during an ambassador session?

- First meeting
 - Introduce yourself: tell the new employee about your role, how long you've been with PCC, how you felt as a new employee, and what excites you about working for the department
 - Ask about them: what was their previous work? What are their hobbies/interests? What are they excited about in their new role? What are they nervous or unsure about?
 - We recommend you take the new hire somewhere outside the immediate office environment for ambassador sessions, for example, a coffee shop.
 - Set up regular meetings with the new hire
- Take the new hire on a tour of the building and campus if applicable. Refer to the [Onboarding Ambassador Action List](#) for a list of places to include in the tour.
- The ambassador answers questions and shares experiences that will help the new hire navigate the department's culture, social norms and expectations
 - (i.e. What are the team's schedules? How do I ask for time off if my child falls ill? If I have an idea on process improvement, who do I go to and how should I reach out?)
- The ambassador answers questions the new hire may feel uncomfortable asking the manager as a source for clarification of policies, procedures and protocols
- The ambassador imparts knowledge to increase the new hire's productivity and performance
- Once the new hire feels integrated and comfortable, schedule a last ambassador session
- We recommend the ambassador help introduce the new employee to others to help them network around the college

Other Suggestions

- It's a good idea to create a shared FAQ document. You and other onboarding ambassadors can pool together commonly asked questions and create information repositories to provide to future new hires in your area
- Please feel free to share ideas, information, or FAQs with the [New Hire Experience Coordinator](#)

