A few years after joining the Catering by Design team in 2003, Patti Reinhardt sought to advance her Notre Dame career but was sometimes frustrated by the misperceptions of others. “Oh, well, you’re a service employee,” she paraphrases, “you can’t possibly manage a project.”

She vowed to prove them wrong. When Reinhardt learned about the University’s staff development program called TAP (Today’s Administrative Professional), she enrolled right away. “I loved that program,” she says. “It gave me an increased confidence in my abilities. That’s what started my desire for education, realizing what Notre Dame had to offer.”

Back then, what Notre Dame had to offer hadn’t been offered for long. The TAP program Reinhardt discovered had just been created the year before, following the first-ever ND Voice survey in 2006.

“Too many staff felt they weren’t being developed for future opportunities.”

Led by the Office of Human Resources, the University responded by designing a staff development strategy to fill the void. One of the first programs to be created, the Learning at Work Program allowed staff to earn an Ivy Tech associate’s degree fully funded by Notre Dame. The new program also offered high school equivalency (GED) classes and English classes for non-native speakers. Today, Freeman calls the Learning at Work program “life changing” for many participants who are earning a first degree or overcoming literacy barriers to further their careers.

The University also added programs for managers, such as Leading with Impact, Frontline Supervision, and the Building Leadership Excellence series, and approved central funding so faculty and staff seeking development wouldn’t have to depend on their department to cover the costs.

The new programs were hugely successful. But did the ND Voice results change? “Yes, but not right away,” Freeman says. “Once we started providing these programs, people said, ‘great! Give me more!’ So the success created more demand.” When the University added even more programs such as TAP and the Project Management Certificate Program, “that’s when the ND Voice scores really started to climb.” But Freeman still hopes to see a strong showing in the 2014 survey participation. “What’s relevant in 2006 is probably different in 2014. Things change. We want to see if we’ve improved in our focus areas, but also see if something else has shifted,” she says.

Meanwhile, Reinhardt’s career at the University is climbing. She completed her associate’s degree through the Learning at Work program and landed a position at Mendoza’s Gigot Center where today she is a Program Assistant. “I really enjoy my job. I’m given a lot of responsibility,” she says. “I can do my thing and provide results. It’s an amazing feeling.” Reinhardt has since completed her Bachelor’s degree. “My husband is thrilled. He says ‘you’re such a different person.’”

Learning programs help careers, job satisfaction climb

ND Voice 2014 is the University's fifth bi-annual employee engagement survey. This confidential survey asks your opinions on workplace topics such as training, benefits, management, and more. Your feedback helps the University – and your department – spot opportunities and take action.

How is the survey used? The University looks at the overall results, and each department also looks at its own. When compared to previous surveys, trends emerge. Did prior action areas improve? Have new opportunities developed? Your feedback starts the sort of conversations that can lead to positive changes like this one.

For more stories and information about NDVOICE2014, visit hr.nd.edu/ndvoice