RECOGNITION

GSE Human Resources Design Challenge

APRIL 1 - APRIL 5

Graduate School of Education
Penn GSE

CATALYST @ Penn GSE

EMPATHY INTERVIEWS

What does recognition mean to you?
What ways do you like to be recognized?

From our empathy interviews with GSE staff, we discovered that recognition is meaningful and viewed positively when **personalized**. Staff identified **multiple definitions of recognition** and a wide variety of preferred forms or **methods of recognition.**

- Recognition is **awarding extraordinary performance**, an acknowledgement that someone has gone above and beyond the expectations of their position or acted as a **change agent** who is moving the mission of GSE forward.
- Recognition is **"being seen" and valued** as a part of GSE—where employees are known, accepted, and celebrated for who they are and their unique contribution to the GSE community.
- Recognition is being acknowledged or thanked for **everyday contributions** even if the work performed is an expected part of your work.

REFRAMING OUR CHALLENGE

- How might we create systems to recognize Penn GSE employees in meaningful ways?
- How might we **inspire** Penn GSE staff to
  - **recognize their colleagues**
  - **recognize everyday contributions**
  - **recognize great achievements**
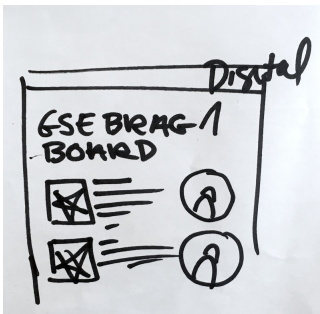   - in **meaningful** and **personalized** ways?
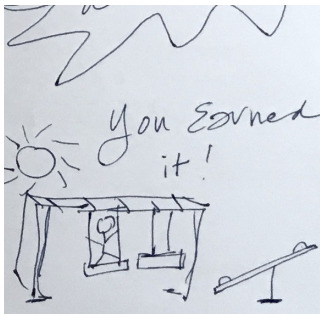
IDEATION

Crazy 8s

In this quick brainstorming session we focused on creating as many ideas as possible within a short time frame, without concern to developing the concepts deeply.
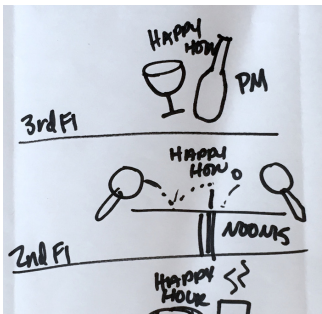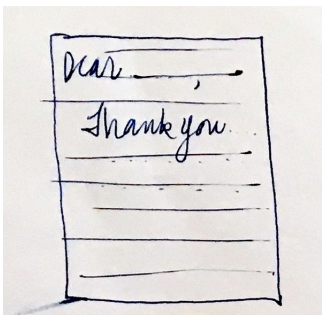

GSE Game Time
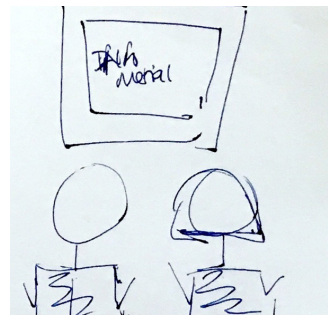Happy Hour

Digital Brag Board
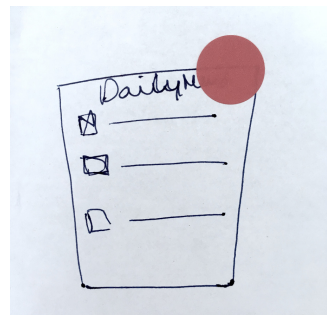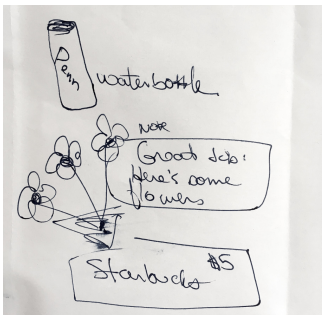3700 Lobby TV
Team or EOM Feature

Take a 1/2 day!

Handwritten Thank
You Notes

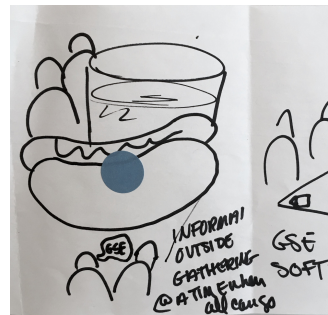
Recognition
Infomerical

Newsletter
Employee Spotlight

Thank you gift
of choice

Staff
Gathering
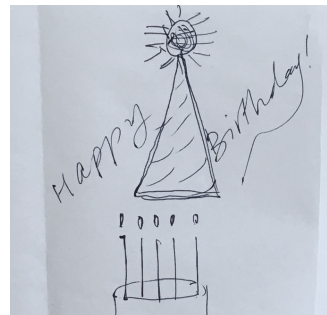
Birthday
Celebrations

IDEATION

Solution Sketches

In our "semi-final round" of brainstorming sprinters took one ideas and developed it more showing the concept from start to finish.

GSE ANNUAL OUTING

An off-campus outing to a fun event. One sprinter envisioned a day at the ballpark to see a Phillies Game. Buses would take all staff together to the stadium, then we'd have refreshments together, watch the game, enjoy the outdoors, and leave with GSE swag for all.

TRAINING/COMMUNITY BUILDING

A division or team could have a lunchtime training for them to get to know each other, to understand the importance of recognition, to learn about how each member would like to be acknowledged, and build community among the team for better future communication and collaboration.

IDEATION

GRATITUDE PHOTOSTICKER MOSAIC/MURAL
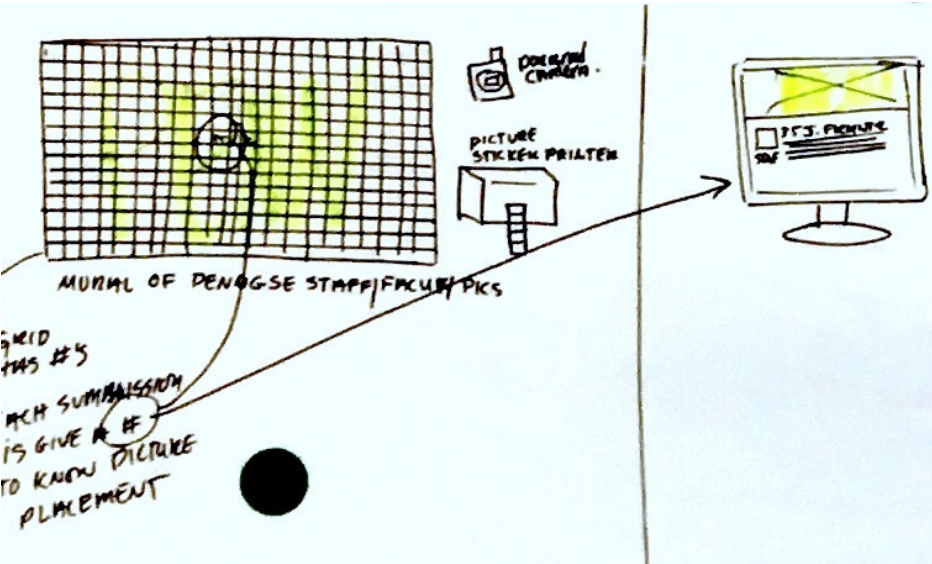
A public, visual way to express gratitude. Staff members would submit appreciation, thank you, gratitude, recognition of a job well done to a site/app. A wall would be designated for the mosaic/mural (or maybe a portable one, like a dry erase board on wheels, but just a wall—could be rolled out for staff meetings).

A sticker printer next to the grid of the mosaic prints out a picture of the person and the recognition. The sticker is associated with a number on the mosaic grid. When you print out your recognition you stick it on the grid and over time it would build an image made out of our faces that make a larger image with text that says something like PENN GSE.

ANNUAL REVIEW ADDITIONS

This initiative would add recognition to the current annual self-appraisal and performance review assessments. Employees would include how they have recognized colleagues and identify their own achievements. Recognition would be a item for discussion during the review meeting.
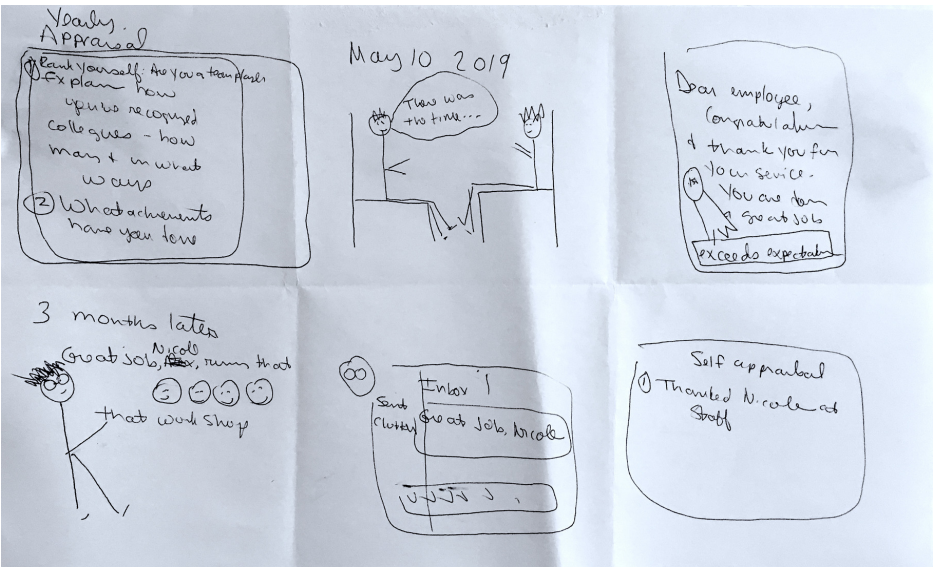

Based on the information provided in the self-appraisal, employees would get recognition best suited to them: in an email, in a public forum, as a certificate, or handwritten letter. Managers would also include in their own self-appraisals who they recognized and in what ways they recognized their colleagues.

PROTOTYPES

We identified two solutions that we wanted to prototype and test. One prototype, *1% for Gratitude Challenge*, focused on inspiring a culture of gratitude and speaking to the definitions of recognition that emphasized being valued and recognized for everyday contributions. The second prototype was aimed at on rewarding exceptional performance with opportunities for further professional development and growth.

1% FOR GRATITUDE CHALLENGE
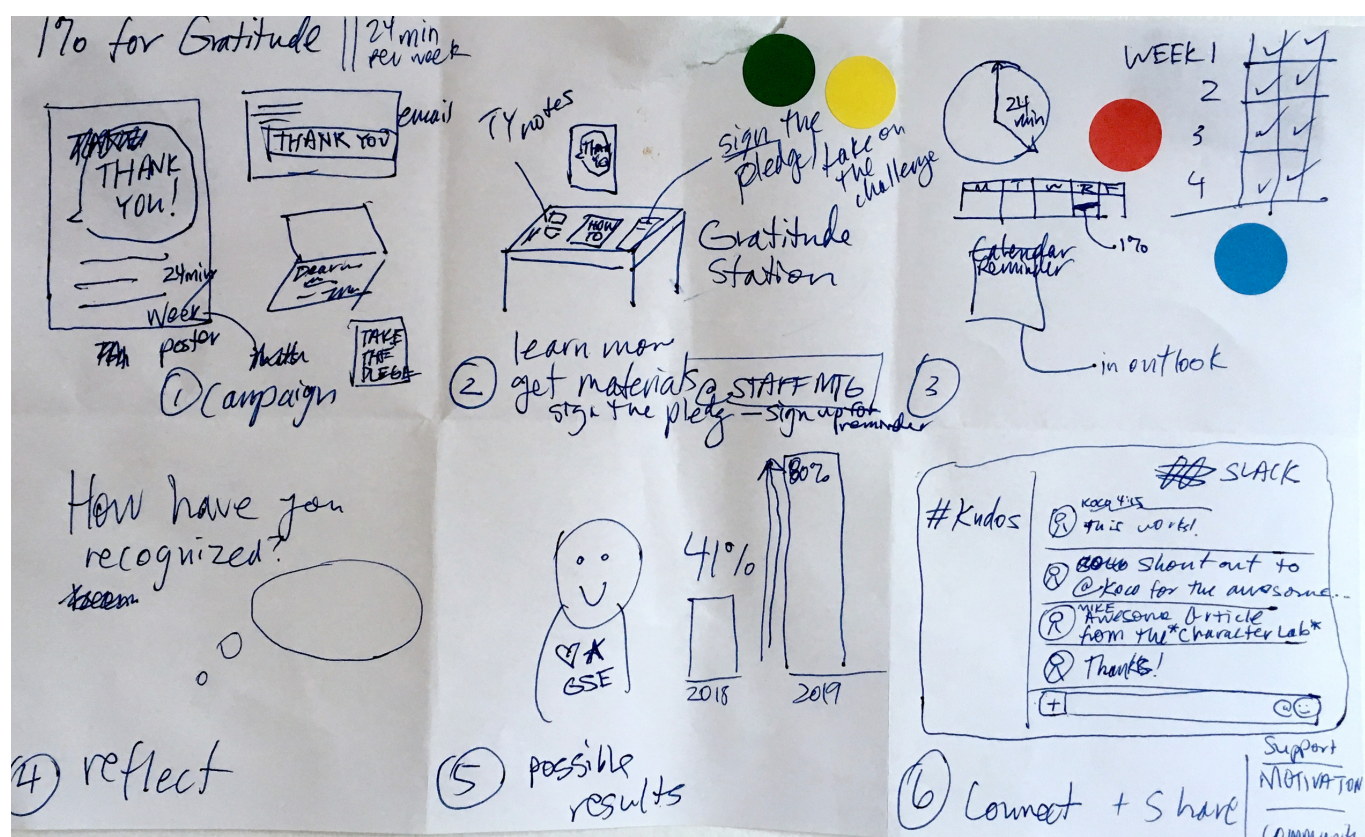
In the same way that we set goals for charitable contributions each year through Penn's Way, this recognition program would aim to increase the amount of gratitude shown by all employees at GSE—by committing just 1% of their work week to recognize colleagues.

To develop a culture of gratitude the challenge would have three components:
+ an email campaign to build awareness around the impact of gratitude and recognition
+ a "gratitude station" at staff meetings to inspire colleagues with materials and resources to help write handwritten thank you notes, and
+ an online community component, like a #kudos Slack channel, to motivate colleagues to continue the commitment of 1% of their week (~24 minutes or 2 handwritten thank you notes) throughout the year and share the ways they have been showing gratitude.

PROTOTYPES

DEEP DIVE INTO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
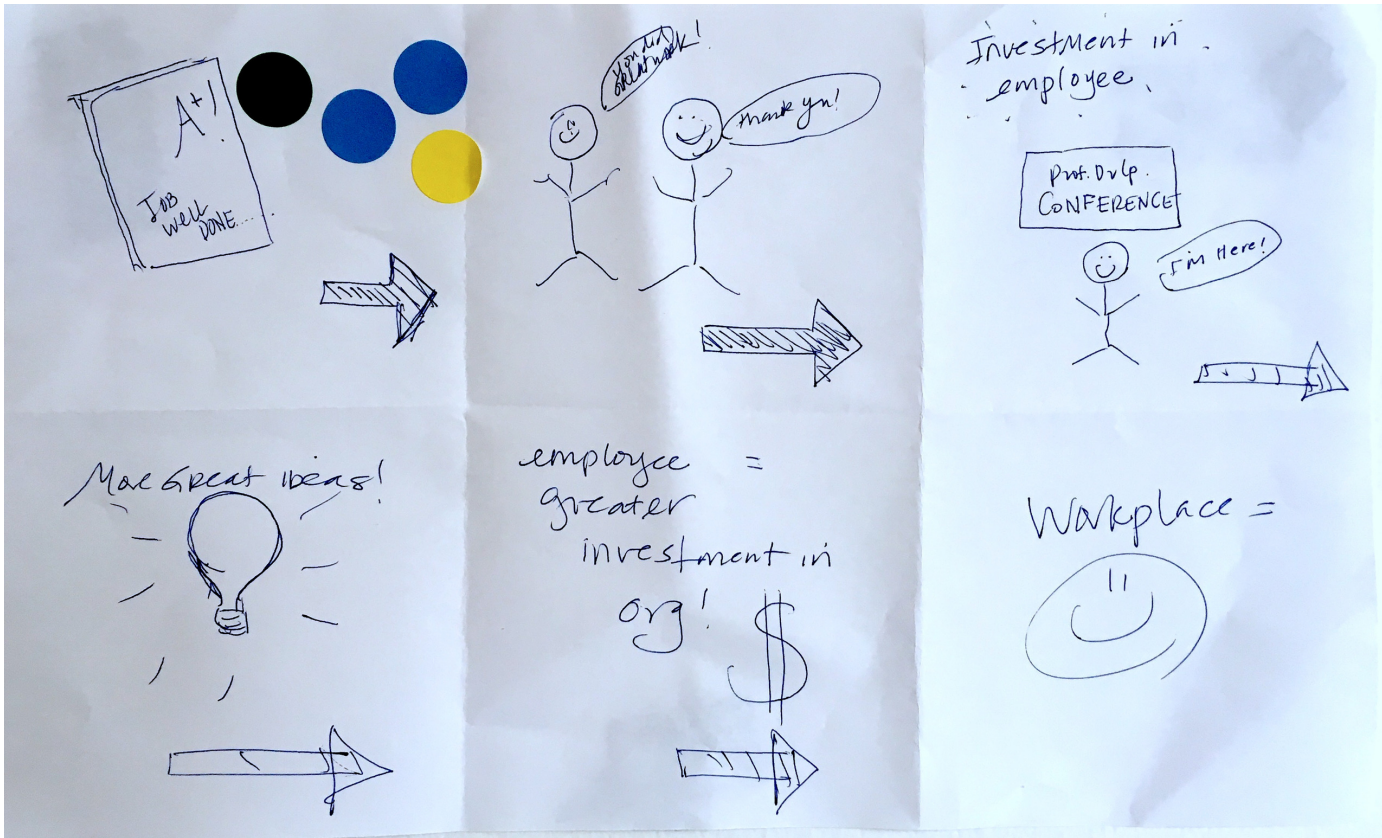
Staff members who have gone above and beyond expectations would be granted the opportunity to go to a conference to further develop their skills. The recognition in this design comes in the form of financial support for professional development. The award of PD is further investment in the employee. Supervisors would have the opportunity to acknowledge work well done and select opportunities that they think match the needs the employee and would support the goals of the division and school.

PROTOTYPES TESTING
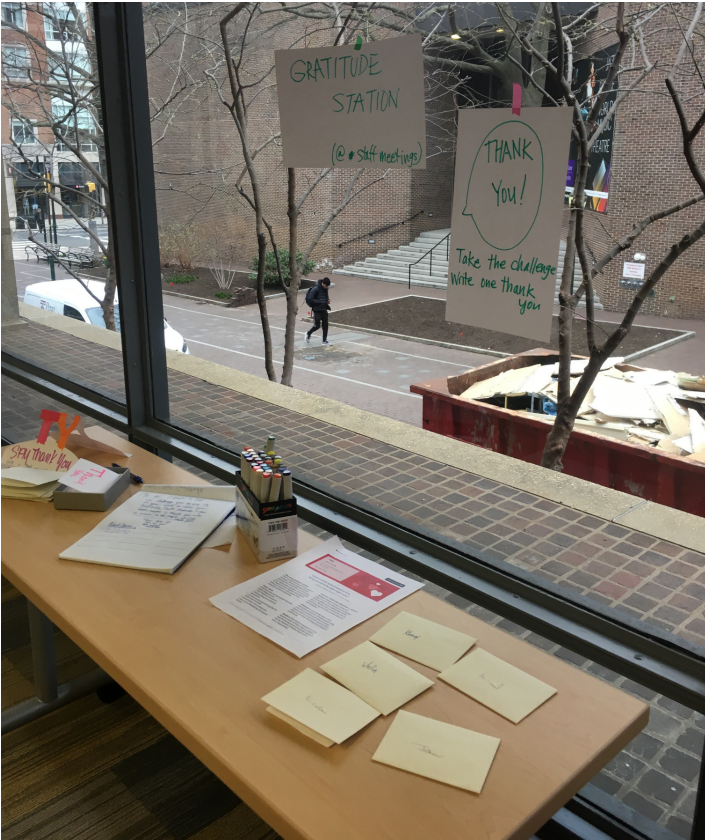
1% FOR GRATITUDE

DEEP DIVE INTO PD

FINAL SUGGESTIONS
What did we learn?
What would we change for the next iteration?
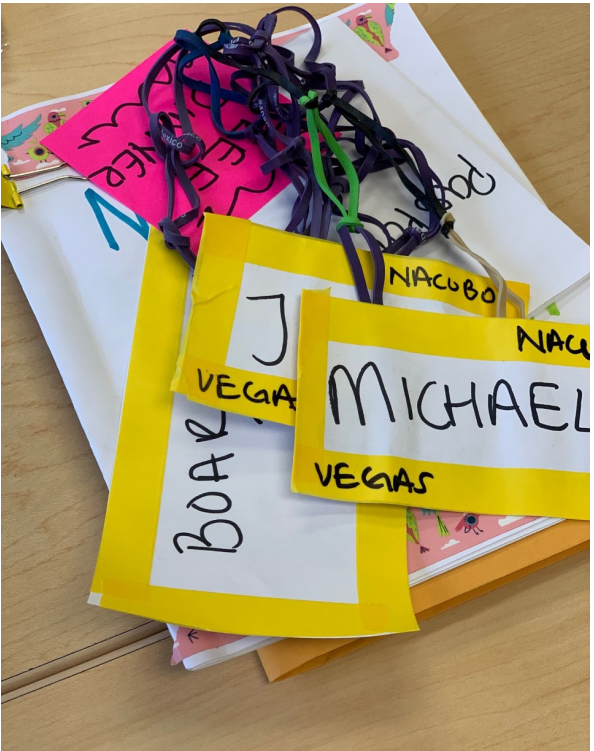
From testing our prototypes with GSE staff, we discovered that neither of our prototypes were a "one-size-fits-all" solution. As a design sprint team we recommend adopting more than just one of these ideas to suit the needs of all GSE staff.

1 % for Gratitude

I like...   + the idea!
              + the attention to detail, getting a personalized thank you note.
              + the opportunity to express authentic appreciation without having to
              speak in a public forum in front of a large group.

I wish...   + this idea had a better name. It sounds like a fundraiser or a campaign
              about income inequality.
              + there were different card/stationery options—cute ones, funny ones,
              in addition to classic thank you cards.
              + there were fun pens.
              + I knew what to say on the spot.

What if...   + markers/pens were on the tables at the staff meeting?
              + there was a "take away" bucket? What if staff members were offered
              the option to take cards with them to write and deliver later in addition
              to writing them there and leaving them for people to pick up?
              + we had a public space dedicated to displaying some of the great thank
              yous, perhaps as a collage for the community?
              + some of our thank you notes could be read to the staff at the end of
              the meeting in addition to our current end of the meeting appreciations?

Additional Observations + Suggestions

Support recognition initiative with resources/inspiration/training
There was an ongoing theme of "I'm not quite sure how to do this or what to say." Launch with resources and keep people engaged with examples, articles (The Character Lab has some great gratitude resources), and opportunities to connect people in support of nurturing a culture of recognition.

Try new initiatives. Be patient and persistent.
One tester said, "New traditions take time." There was an expressed desire to see a more present culture of recognition and gratitude--that gratitude should be part of everyone's day at GSE. At the same time, it's not expected that a culture shift will happen over night.

DESIGN CHALLENGE: RECOGNITION

Deep Dive into Professional Development

I like...   + the idea of investing in staff and it shows that staff is valued and seen as being worth investing in
+ the idea that management is taking next steps with staff PD

I wish...   + this took into account that people do have lives and responsibilities outside of GSE (family, GSE courses, desire to travel). Some can or want to jump on a plane for a conference for a few days, but not all.
+ I could select my own professional development opportunity instead of my manager selecting it for me.
+ this didn't feel like my reward for a job well done is homework that by boss picked out for me.

What if...   + staff were acknowledged for a job well done and offered the chance to select their own professional development opportunity?
+ there were GSE swag bags that staff could take with them to the conference/PD of their choice to rep GSE?

Additional Observations + Suggestions

Personalize or Offer Choice

For an idea like this to work supervisors need to know their staff well. It needs to be personalized . Allowing employees to select their own opportunities with timeframes and locations that suite them would offer more flexibility and freedom.

GSE SWAG

The topic of GSE branded Penn apparel, mugs, etc. was mentioned multiple times by sprinters, staff interviewed, and one of our testers.
+ People like swag.
+ Staff would be proud and happy to represent the brand of GSE.
+ Some staff would buy GSE branded sweatshirts, reusable water bottles, coffee mugs, totes, etc. if they were available at the bookstore. A few staff members mentioned the were unable to find GSE swag at the bookstore—for every other school it seemed, but not GSE.

REFLECTIONS

Sprinters reflected on the past week of design challenge activities. Overall the experience was positive for all. Comments centered around the great opportunity to collaborate and the challenge with the time commitment.

Collaboration across divisions builds community
Sprinters found tremendous value in working and creating something together. The sprint created the chance for people from different departments—as well as staff members from the same teams—to really get to know each other in meaningful ways.

"The quality of the solution is in how we define the problem."
Many other questions and challenges were unearthed in this process and not all of them were addressed in the ideas produced or tested. One of the final conclusions, though it will cliche in this academic environment, is that further research is needed. There is interest in continuing investigate this topic and hopes that there will be more opportunities for staff to engage in the designing and developing initiatives that impact the workplace culture and climate.

Time: too much + not enough
Ten hours was not enough time for this work, at the same time it was logistically almost impossible for some to balance with work responsibilities.

Spreading Design Thinking @ GSE
For one sprinter engaged in research activities at GSE, she really enjoyed experiencing a different process for problem solving. She also noted how her current research practices have similarities and was excited to bring some of the spirit and methods of design thinking to her process. Lastly, sprinters were interested in having access to a design thinking resources and methods collection.

Many Thanks!
The sprint on recognition, in itself, acted as a program or initiative to develop more recognition and practices of gratitude at GSE. The experience was really incredible and profoundly rewarding. We had the chance to connect with colleagues, to see and appreciate what they do here at GSE. It will bring more recognition back to our teams and into our everyday work.

THANK YOU for this design sprint!

THANK YOU!