

Staff Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 14, 2004, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.
S401 PBB

Present: Nadira Ahmad, Christine Annicella, David Bergeon, Linda Bergquist, Ella Born, James Bradley, Kimberly Chamberlin, Janet Duncan, Charlie Eastham, Nancy Fick, David Fitzgerald, John Forys, Jo Ann Franklin, Julie Gilmore, Mary Greer, Maggie Hogan, Kristy Johnson, Hazel Kerr, Kathy Klein, Mark Long, David Martin, Mary Lee Neuberger, Sara Nichols, Janette Pettus, Deb Pfab, Cheryl Reardon, Sandra Reed, Heather Schnoebelen, Julie Sexton, Sheri Sojka, Barbara Spence, Rebecca Stamy, Duncan Stewart, Rachelle Stewart, Jennifer Tucker, Jeffrey Wasson, Jan Waterhouse, Rhonda Weaver, Michelle Wichman, Kathryn Wynes, Al Young.

Absent: Cheri Arneson, Lori Bassler, Lori Cranston, Julee Darner, Lisa Marie James, Deborah Kohler, Steven Long, Bonnie McIntosh, Keri Semrau.

Administrative Liaisons: Sue Buckley, AVP of Finance and University Services and Director of Human Resources; Kevin Ward, Senior Associate Director of Human Resources and Director of Employee and Labor Relations; Richard Saunders, Director of University Benefits

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:33 p.m.

2. Approval and review of minutes

- Staff Council June 2004 Meeting Minutes were reviewed, and two amendments were made. Approved as amended.
- Executive Committee June 2004 Meeting Minutes: discussion postponed until September meeting.
- Executive Committee June 2004 Meeting with President Skorton Minutes were reviewed.

3. Staff Council Business

- a. **Staff Appreciation Day**, Nancy Noyer. A summary report was provided with the meeting packet. HR has decided to explore new ideas for staff appreciation next year, if funds are available. The following comments were offered:
 - The online award nominations were appreciated.
 - The funds used for Staff Appreciation Day could be used to fund more staff excellence awards.
 - Activities could be decentralized so departments could do their own staff appreciation activity.
 - Some groups that were outside of their main department area appreciated the fruit being brought to them in their area.
 - Suggest a campus survey to learn what various departments do to show appreciation for staff.

b. **Education Committee proposal**, Tuition Assistance Program, Rachele Stewart & Michelle Wichman. The Education Committee has partnered with HR to survey Big Ten schools to learn about their tuition assistance programs. The purpose of the proposal is to make tuition assistance more easily available to all staff. The Committee's proposal is to combine all funds currently available through the various programs into one pool of money. See the handout which outlines the proposal. The Committee would seek to implement the new program in January 2005. Applications would be submitted electronically. The following comments were offered:

- o Under the combined system, all courses must be work-related. Some of the programs available now do not require the course to be work-related. However, the new program would no longer require a degree program, so in that respect the proposal makes funds available to more people who are not in a degree program.
- o The proposal increases the amount of money available for all categories of staff.
- o Some courses may be helpful for a staff member's career development, but not related to the current position/department. Possibly the applicant could be asked to describe how the course is related to their professional development, so the supervisor/department would not have absolute control over whether the staff member is eligible. We could establish priorities so that courses related to one's current position have top priority, and others could have lower priority. There is benefit to the UI in cross-training staff for other positions.
- o Professional development should be defined more broadly to benefit a staff person's future career path, not just the current position.
- o An option might be to allow staff members to forward applications even if their supervisor refuses to sign, and HR could review it.

A motion was made and seconded to table the discussion until a future date to provide councilors with an opportunity to consider the proposal further. The motion was seconded. The motion carried. This proposal will be discussed further in September.

c. **Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations for Emeritus Research Staff**, Charlie Eastham. A written recommendation was distributed. The ad hoc committee recommends that Staff Council request HR to seek eligibility for the following specific P&S staff categories to gain emeritus status upon retirement: research scientist, associate research scientist, assistant research scientist, research engineer, associate research engineer, assistant research engineer. Emeritus faculty have surface parking privileges, email address, office space is negotiable, maintain priority for purchasing athletics tickets, and are members of the faculty emeritus council. Librarians have similar privileges except for membership in the emeritus council. A motion was made and seconded to approve the recommendation of the ad hoc committee. The motion carried.

d. **By-Laws Committee, proposed changes to by-laws**, Julie Gilmore. Bylaws Committee submitted proposed changes to Article IX, Duties of Officers. The proposal would delete the Secretary's duty to serve on MJS Fellowship committee

because the Education Committee already participates in the selection. Also propose to delete the duty of the Past President to serve a second year on President's Council because this is no longer the practice. The Committee also proposes an amendment to Article XVII to require a two-thirds vote *of those present* at a regular meeting to amend the bylaws. These amendments will be voted on at the September meeting. A recommendation was made from the floor to make additional changes to Article IX Sections 2 and 3. The Bylaws Committee will consider these additional suggestions in the course of a comprehensive review of the bylaws.

- e. **Re-categorization of staff**, Kathryn Wynes. The HR Committee had heard concern about how staff members are categorized in the Staff Council categories. The HR Committee suggests that each employee should receive a communication identifying the Staff Council category that represents him/her and inviting the staff member to submit a written request if he/she wished to be recategorized. The Executive Committee would consider the request. The staff member and the Executive Committee would need to agree in order to change the category; if they could not agree then the staff member would remain in the current category. This will be discussed further in September.
- f. **Staff Awards for UI Service.** The Executive Committee has been working on an idea to create a new staff award to recognize service to the UI, to be awarded at convocation. President Skorton approves of the idea and has agreed to provide some initial funds for the award. A proposal will be forthcoming.
- g. **Feedback from President's Forum.** Some critical comments were related to the acoustics in the room. Of 18 responses, 15 indicated they were comfortable with the forum being videotaped and most said that Staff Council should continue to videotape the forums.
- h. **Joint Faculty-Staff Budget Committee Selections.** Nominations were taken at the June meeting. The Executive Committee selected David Bergeon and John Forys to serve beginning in September. Charlie Eastham and Margaret Raymond will co-chair the committee.
- i. **Regents and Staff Excellence Award Winners.** Sara Nichols announced this year's recipients. Over 40 nominations were received for the 12 awards. The Board of Regents Staff Excellence Award recipients are:
 - Sandra J. Jirsa
 - Michael D. Schueller MS
 - Jamie D. Sharp MS
 - James C. Walker PhD CIH
 - Michelle L. Wiegand MBA

- Joel F. Wilcox PhD

The UI Outstanding Staff Award recipients are:

- Susan J. Carlson MMSC, RD
- Keith A. Miller Senior
- Jacqueline Nelson MA MBA BSN
- Joyce Terhune
- Donna Welter
- Martha Wieland RN BSN HP(ASCP)

j. **CIC Conference.** The conference is scheduled for October 11th in Chicago. A sign-up sheet was circulated for councilors to indicate interest. Staff Council will pay for some councilors to attend. Executive Committee will select councilors to attend from those who indicate interest. The UI hosts this conference next year.

k. **Announcement,** Sara Nichols. Nominations for the VP of Research should be turned in as soon as possible. Sara is on the search committee.

4. **Comments/Regents Report,** Sue Buckley

a. **GEF Task Force Recommendations: Vacation Banking.** The recommendation is to cap the maximum future vacation accruals at 192 hours. Current policy allows accruals up to approximately 400 hours. The maximum sick leave conversion to vacation of 96 hours would remain in addition to the maximum vacation accruals. There currently are 800-900 people at the maximum vacation accrual, including merit and SEIU staff who would not be affected by this change. It would take a long time to realize the estimated savings of \$250,000. On average most people who terminate have about 207 hours. The first year savings would be about \$38,000. The following comments were offered:

- Savings could also be realized by capping the maximum payout on termination. However, there is a legal obligation to pay out vacation.
- Staff reductions have made it harder to take vacation, so people may not be taking it and may be banking more than they would otherwise.
- There is a risk of having a large number of people take chunks of vacation when the policy goes into effect so they would not be at the max. If someone is at the max, they have to take vacation immediately at the beginning of the month to accrue additional vacation that month.
- There is concern for people using FMLA leave, because the new maximum would not allow them to have 6 weeks of vacation to be paid during the 12 week leave.
- The reason for banking may be due to departments not approving vacation requests.
- Some people take time off and don't claim it.
- People can donate time under catastrophic leave. Perhaps those who are at or close to the max accrual should be asked to donate time before others who have less.
- Will departments be pressured to allow those at max to take their vacation, so they can take the time rather than lose it?

- This may harm research employees because in certain periods of time in the grant cycle, you can't take time off. These same concerns apply to staff across the university.
- This would cause a lot of tension if organized staff do not have a similar limit. Non-organized staff already feel like they're taking the hit.
- The new max may make it impossible for people who have personal circumstances to recover financially if they take time off in excess of the max, including those who need to use long-term disability insurance which has a 90 day waiting period.
- The amount that might be saved is small compared to the bad will that would be generated.
- Some people count on the payout as part of their retirement.
- GEF task force charge was to find savings that could be realized in 3 years. These savings would not be realized until after that time.
- P&S already took a hit on raises this year. Hitting them with this in the same year would be very detrimental to staff morale.
- This would be a major policy change that will affect a small group of staff.
- Only 22% of staff is paid from GEF funds, so the actual savings to the GEF would be even smaller.

Sue encourages Staff Council to talk to our FRIC representatives (Dan Holub is our staff representative) because they will play an important role in the discussion and decision on these issues.

The Executive Committee will discuss providing a statement to President Skorton/FRIC outlining the Staff Council's position on the various recommendations.

Preview of next month's issue: the senior HR council is discussing an option for career status staff who are furloughed. The notice period is 6-12 months depending on how long the staff member has been in career status. There is discussion of creating an option to shorten the notice period to 3 months (with furlough rights) plus provide a lump sum payout with the amount to depend on the length of time in career status. The department and employee would have to agree to this option. The rationale is that in some situations both the department and the employee are better off if the separation can occur more quickly. A written summary was provided for review. This will be discussed further at the September meeting.

5. Committee Reports

- HR Committee**, Kathryn Wynes. Report postponed
- MSE Committee**, Kathy Klein. Report postponed.
- UIHC Committee**, Mary Lee Neuberger. The committee has been in contact by email. The purpose of the committee is to meet with UIHC senior administration to discuss issues affecting staff. They are currently soliciting ideas for issues to take up this fall.

6. Miscellaneous

- a. Name tags will be mailed to each councilor to put on doors, bulletin boards, etc.
- b. Steve Long is resigning his position. Nominations to fill the vacancy will be taken in September.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Jan Waterhouse, Secretary