

**Staff Council Executive Committee  
Meeting with President Skorton  
May 28, 2004, 8:00 – 9:00 a.m.  
101 Jessup Hall**

**Present:** Christine Annicella, Ella Born, Charlie Eastham, Hazel Kerr, Cheryl Reardon, Jan Waterhouse, Michelle Wichman

**Absent:** Sheri Sojka

**Administrative Liaisons:** Sue Buckley, AVP of Finance and University Services and Director of Human Resources

**1. President Skorton's Comments**

- a. Budget.** President Skorton believes there will be no new layoffs as a direct result of the \$2 million in cuts implemented for FY05. However, individual departments may still need to eliminate positions to manage their own budgets.

President Skorton is not comfortable making major changes to benefits as recommended by the GEF Task Force without further study. He would like Staff Council to be involved in ongoing review of these issues.

President Skorton will consider implementing some cost savings on utilities over the next few years by taking direct climate control away from individual units.

President Skorton would like to continue to meet with the Executive Committee during the summer to continue discussing budget issues.

**2. Staff Council President's Comments**

**a. Staff Awards**

- i. **Response to call for nominations.** Staff Council saw a dramatic increase in the number of nominations for the Staff Excellence Award and BOR Staff Award. We are pleased that staff are being recognized, but the number of nominations may indicate a need for additional awards to recognize the contributions of staff.
- ii. **Creating a new staff award.** The Executive Committee has discussed the idea of creating a new staff service award with a cash stipend, similar to the faculty Brody award, to be presented at the annual Convocation. This award would recognize service to the UI. President Skorton approves of this idea and will provide the funds for a cash stipend for FY05 and FY06. He believes the cash stipend should be similar to the amount given with the faculty

Brody award. Mary Schott will be the contact in the President's Office to coordinate the funding.

President Skorton is also aware of the need to increase staff recognition. He has been working on ideas to increase the staff presence at the annual Finkbine Dinner. His office is also developing a proposal to create three new awards to recognize external public service. Tom Dean provided a draft proposal that is in development. There would be one award each for faculty, staff, and students, and the award would provide a cash award. The plan is to take the first nominations this fall, and the first recipients would be recognized at the Convocation in Fall 2005. Staff Council would be asked to assist in selecting recipients. President Skorton asks for feedback on the proposal.

- iii. **Staff Appreciation Day.** A new format was utilized this year. Overall, the comments have been positive but there have been a few negative comments as well. Several on-line contests were held in conjunction with Staff Appreciation Day, in which staff would nominate co-workers for positive actions in various categories. In total, nearly 900 nominations were received which indicates a significant rate of participation.

### **3. Updates and Discussion Topics**

a. **P&S salary survey.** No discussion.

b. **GEF Task Force recommendations.** The feedback received during a recent Staff Council meeting indicates that staff were in general comfortable with the process utilized by the Task Force. Staff Council has received some questions about how the Council could have made recommendations that so heavily impact staff. Cheryl asked what actions could be taken to help departments that were targeted for cuts to deal with potential transitions and cope with anxiety about potential cuts. Sue Buckley suggested that a timeline for decision making could be established, so that people have some expectations about when decisions will be made. With that information being known to the campus, steps could be made to provide more direct assistance to staff.

President Skorton plans to send a mass email to the campus by early June to provide additional information about the timeline for decision-making. He will ask for input from Staff Council.

President Skorton has received very negative feedback about cutting vacation accruals. He wants to examine further the recommendations relating to flex benefits for married employees and TIAA CREF vesting.

He recognizes that cutting general education funds from athletics would definitely result in layoffs of staff and a decrease in student participation.

President Skorton is open to the idea of scheduling some open meetings for people to ask questions of him and the Provost. He asks for Staff Council input about this idea in the next two weeks.

The Executive Committee has heard comments from staff questioning why staff shouldn't unionize to get bigger raises, given that the organized merit raises have been larger in recent years. President Skorton is not opposed to staff unionization. However, he recognizes that unionization may result in layoffs to deal with budgetary constraints. He suggests that staff examine UNI's unionization model to see what has happened when staff and faculty unionized.

President Skorton would appreciate feedback about what staff would rather see: larger salary increases and more layoffs, or less salary increases with no/fewer layoffs.

- c. **Update on budget for FY05.** See President Skorton's comments above.
- d. **New leadership on Board of Regents,** impact on UI campus and staff involvement in shared governance. The rhetoric reported in the newspapers makes it seem that the Regents are focused on faculty, but not so much emphasis on staff.

President Skorton indicates that BOR President Forsythe is very focused on faculty and staff salaries. President Forsythe moved last year to ask the legislature only for salary money.

President Skorton states that faculty salaries are low compared to the relevant market rate, while P&S salaries are in general close to the relevant market rate. Therefore, he recognizes the current need to focus more on faculty salaries.

The discussions about consolidation of services across the three state institutions so far address only the top line administration. BOR President Forsythe has indicated that those decisions will be made by Presidents of the Universities, not by the BOR. President Skorton does not believe there is a significant risk of colleges being closed, although some regents want to do so.

Sue Buckley stated that there is also consideration of establishing common systems across all institutions, with administration possibly being centralized at one institution.

The Presidents are meeting soon to discuss all of these ideas, so that they can provide feedback to the BOR in the near future.

President Skorton is willing to schedule additional meetings with the Executive Committee during the summer to continue discussing these issues.