MINUTES

UW-Madison University Staff Congress

8.17.15

All members recorded as ‘present’ with the following exceptions:

Excused Absent: D. Morris (107), R. Childs (140), C. Lazar (166), B. Timm (173), A. Rosas (192), N. Hilmanowski (USEC – 9)

Absent: B. Peters (130), K. Woelke (136), M. Adem (139), M. Jacobson (141), J. Yanzapanta (145), M. Diebold (149), T. Witte (151), T. Handland (162), D. Coshenet (164)

In addition, 4 Alternates were present.

At 2:30PM, Vice Chancellor Bazzell, called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell paused to accept public comments. None sought recognition.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell provided a report from his office in which he congratulated the newly elected members of Congress and thanked those who returned for an additional term. Vice Chancellor Bazzell acknowledged the challenges presented by a difficult fiscal year and budget process and pledged to discuss resulting issues as appropriate. Vice Chancellor Bazzell noted the approach of a new semester and the return of the student body. Vice Chancellor Bazzell invited everyone to participate in the scheduled ice-cream social for 2nd and 3rd shift employee.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell recognized USEC Chair Russell Kutz for the purpose of providing a report from the Executive Committee. Mr. Kutz provided the results of the election for the position of Congressional Liaison in which Mr. Jake Rebholz was declared the winner (proceedings interrupted by applause). Mr. Kutz noted that posters promoting the reimbursements available through the Professional Development and Tuition Committee were still available upon request to the office of the Secretary of the University Staff. Mr. Kutz informed the Congress of the offer from the Department of Continuing Studies to sponsor 3 seats each in two different classes for members of the University Staff. Mr. Kutz informed the Congress of the need to fill a seat for University Staff on the Children in the Workplace Committee. Mr. Kutz directed the attention of the Congress to the Minutes of the Executive Committee sessions if they wished to learn more about the work being conducted there and to prepare questions for his future appearances at Congress meetings in the coming months.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell entertained a motion in regard to the membership composition of the Nominations Committee.

Representative of District 161 moved to change the composition of the Nominations Committee, upon the expiration of their current term, to 5 permanent members of the University Staff. A second to the motion was heard. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.
Vice Chancellor Bazzell entertained a motion in regard to the creation of a Congressional University Staff Recognition Award Committee.

Representative of District 161 moved to create a Congressional University Staff Recognition Award Selection Committee, to be comprised of 5 permanent members of the University Staff. Second was heard.

Representative of CSEC Seat 4 requested a friendly amendment to incorporate the Elizabeth S. Pringle Award as part of the Award Selection Committee. Maker of motion and seconder were both agreeable.

Vote was taken. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell entertained a motion in regard to the creation of a Committee on District Vacancies.

Representative of District 161 moved to create a Congressional Committee on District Vacancies, to be comprised of 5 permanent members of the University Staff. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell recognized Mr. Bob Lavigna, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, for the purpose of providing a briefing regarding Operational Areas.

Mr. Lavigna provided a power point presentation regarding Operational Areas. Mr. Lavigna noted that he and other OHR representatives had appeared twice previously before the Executive Committee. Mr. Lavigna informed the Congress that Operational Areas stemmed from the new Layoff policy, noting that layoffs will be conducted by Operational Area, title and seniority. Mr. Lavigna continued that ultimately the goal was to have a single integrated personnel system and this approach to determining layoff priority is consistent with Academic staff.

Mr. Lavigna informed the Congress that there were 650 Operational Areas identified. Mr. Lavigna continued that every time a Division submits a layoff plan, OHR will review the Operational Area in question and referred to the plan as an “ongoing dynamic process”. It was stated that in average there have been 12 layoff notices issued a year. Mr. Lavigna concluded by encouraging feedback if Representatives or their constituents view any Operational Areas as having been arrived at in error.

Representative of District 112 asked when Operational Areas would be reviewed in relation to layoff notices being issued and if this system could cause a problem with supervisors trying to determine where layoffs would occur.

Reply came that typically a layoff decision is not made by the supervisor but rather according to budget constraints related to particular job titles.

Representative of District 103 asked how often will Operational Areas be updated.

Reply came that updates will not be annual but related to changes in job responsibility.
Representative of District 103 stated that they found it troubling that the system could be abused where people are moved into specific Operational Areas that are identified for a layoff.

Reply came that OHR would inquire as to the rationale if a person we in one area and then moved to another prior to a layoff. It was further noted that a layoff is grievable.

Representative of District 103 stated that in his own experience, he had received a letter that his position was subject to a survey that then resulted in a pay increase for the position. Representative inquired what the schedule would be for future surveys of this type.

Reply came that OHR was holding off on any major changes until the title study was complete and in the case of the survey that the Representative referred to, it was likely conducted by OSER.

Representative of District 133 asked what specific efforts were made to create a definition, noting his concern that the criteria in the document used the phrase, “other defined criteria” and expressed his concern that the definitions are too broad.

Reply came that OHR is happy to continue the conversation and hear suggestions for different definitions. Reply came further that OHR tried to keep the definitions narrow enough to prevent mischief but broad enough to apply across campus.

Representative of District 161 asked if the detailed information regarding each Operational Area that was provided to the Executive Committee could also be provided to the members of Congress.

Reply came that the information would be provided to the office of the Secretary for distribution.

Representative of USEC Seat 4 noted that as she understood it, organizational charts played an integral part in creating operational areas. Representative urged members of Congress to examine their own operational areas for accuracy. Representative noted that her own supervisor said that since no layoffs were expected, no additional time was dedicated to the creation of operational areas.

Representative of District 185 asked how a person can find out who is what area.

Reply came that employees should have a conversation with their supervisor and to examine organizational charts and position descriptions.

Representative of District 185 asked as a point of clarification if the areas are based more on the organization chart than they are on job duties.

Reply was in the affirmative.

Representative of District 102 related that in their workplace 12 people out of 15 total share the same job description and inquired if this would be one Operational Area.

Reply came that operational areas that have employees who perform similar functions will be examined.
Representative of District 102 asked as a point of clarification if seniority is not a factor and that it is up to the supervisor as to who is subject to layoff.

Reply came in the negative. Any exception to seniority would have to be approved by OHR. Seniority is the default.

Representative of District 112 made an inquiry regarding reinstatement.

Reply came that the “reinstatement” term is no longer used in University Staff. Reemployment rights apply across Division and are not limited to Operational Area. Reemployment will occur if employee is able to meet the minimal requirements of the job.

Representative of District 112 asked if a person would have to re-apply for their old job.

Reply was in the negative. There is no screening or testing process as in the case of a new applicant.

Representative of District 163 asked a question to clarify if seniority meant when a person began in state service or when they began their current job.

Reply came that seniority date is in reference to when a person began in state service.

Representative of District 202 stated that the letters that had arrived in the mail regarding Operational Areas, had been intimidating. Representative asked how will policy be shared with staff and how will the process be explained.

Reply came that employees should work through HR Reps but that the Department was open to communications suggesting other forms of outreach.

Representative of District 170 expressed concern that the details regarding Operational Areas are not known until a layoff notice is received and made an inquiry regarding exempt overtime employees.

Reply came that referral rights will be granted.

Representative of CSEC Seat 5 stated that seniority is negated by groups in which no one shares the same job title. Representative noted that 16% of Operational Areas have 4 or fewer employees. Representative raised the question as to why it was necessary to introduce a system in which Operational Areas replaced School or Division. Representative stated that this process could lead to layoffs of people with seniority while at the same time new employees stay on the job because they are in different Operational Areas. Representative described the operational area system as “unfair”.

Applause heard in the hall.

Representative of District 103 asked if everyone in the operational area has a different job title would the decision to layoff be made with or without regards to seniority.

Reply came that in that case ‘function’ would come before ‘seniority’.
Representative of District 110 inquired if Congress was on record as having objected to the Operational Areas plan, why did OHR proceed.

Reply came that the process began 4 years ago when OHR began working with stakeholders, advisory groups and work teams to create a strategic plan which had to balance the need to make sure due process regarding job rights continue and to prevent disruption in multiple units during layoffs. The conclusion was the current plan ensured employee rights as well as providing management flexibility.

Representative of District 110 asked if the only choices were “disruption” or the creation of Operational Areas.

Reply came that Operational Areas will be closely examined any time a layoff is at hand.

Representative of District 110 inquired if that part of the process appears in writing.

Reply was in the affirmative.

Representative of District 152 stated that they had served in the first Congress and that Congress did not have the specifics of the Operational Areas at the time or how they would be identified.

Representative of CSEC Seat 4 stated that they could see how disruption is possible under the prior system, but suggested a compromise as opposed to being so restricted to Operational Areas.

Representative criticized what she termed an “all or nothing” approach.

Reply came that OHR was happy to continue the conversation regarding definitions.

Representative of District 112 asked when a person who was laid off returns, would it be at a lower pay rate.

Reply came that pay cannot be set lower than it was before if returning to the same job.

Representative of District 111 described a situation that could occur in her own workplace in which, due to the future merger or dismantling of the department in the next fiscal year, a permanent Student Status Examiner Senior would be laid off while a project employee with the same title located across the hall in another department would keep her job. She asked if her conclusion that this would be the case because of HR’s redefinition of “different Operational Areas” was correct.

Reply was in the affirmative.

Representative of District 163 asked when an Operational Area is identified for layoff, how will people find out.

Reply came that people will be informed as soon as possible. A 60 day notice for layoff is the minimum.

Representative of CSEC Seat 5 noted that he was unconvinced that bumping the least senior person in the job title causes the disruption earlier referred to. Representative noted that he did not see the benefit to University Staff if a project person stays and a senior employee is laid off.
Reply came that multiple employees had to learn new jobs under the previous practice of bumping.

Representative of District 109 asked for clarification regarding the average number of layoffs a year.

Reply came that the average has been 12 layoff notices issued a year. So far this year, 3 positions have been laid off, and two of those persons who held them have found other work.

Representative of CSEC Seat 5 noted that FP&M eliminated over 50 positions but is now hiring outside contractors to provide labor.

Representative of District 161 stated that the size of the public sector is shrinking and eventually those who are laid off will find fewer positions to apply for.

Reply came that the campus is challenged by absorbing a $90 million budget cut.

Representative of District 133 moved to extend the meeting by 10 minutes. A second to the motion was heard. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Representative of District 133 endorsed the remarks of the Representative of CSEC Seat 5 in regard to the use of outside contractors, and cited the move of the Memorial Union kitchen as an example, and further noted that administrative positions continue to be added despite budget cuts. Representative commented he did not see the Operational Area guidelines policy to be helpful to either staff or HR.

Reply came that a substantial number of administrative positions have been eliminated.

Representative of District 124 stated that when positions are eliminated, those remaining have to take on the extra work.

Representative of District 169 requested the statistics for eliminated positions.

Reply came that between 400 and 450 positions were eliminated.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell recognized the Congressional Liaison, Mr. Jake Rebholz, for the purpose of hearing district reports and taking suggestions for future agenda items.

Liaison opened the floor to reports and requests from members of Congress.

Representative of District 177 reported that a joint district meeting was held that also included 108 and 137 and noted that there were questions on the conversion of University Staff positions to Academic Staff and that more information was requested.

Reply came that OHR will provide such information upon request.

Representative of District 103 stated that views regarding policies that were previously laid out by the Congress should be respected.

Reply came that Congress reviewed all HR Design Policies and made numerous recommendations, several of which were adopted.
Representative of CSEC Seat 5 requested that the next Congressional Agenda contain Operational Areas as an ‘action’ item.

Liaison encouraged members to continue to send him suggestions after the meeting.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell informed the Congress that the next meeting of the body would take place in Bascom 272.

At 4:10pm, Vice Chancellor Bazzell entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made and a second was heard. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Minutes prepared and submitted by: J. Lease / Secretary