MINUTES

University Staff Executive Committee Meeting

12.03.15


MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: J. Rebholz, P. Sheehan, E. Van Gemert, D. Bazzell, M. Bernard-Donals

At 2:00PM, Chair Kutz called the meeting to order and instructed the Secretary to record all those present. Chair Kutz directed the attention of the committee to the draft Minutes of the previous meeting.

Ms. Czynszak-Lyne moved, seconded by Mr. Newton, to approve the Minutes. All in favor, with the exception of Mr. Fritter, who abstained. MOTION CARRIED.

Chair Kutz opened the floor to public comments. Mr. Newton opened discussion on his planned extended absence and discussion was heard regarding his options to resign or continue participation in some form. Chair Kutz instructed Mr. Newton that he has the option to ......

Ms. Czynszak-Lyne reported that the Associated Students of Madison have now opened a food pantry to serve those with food insecurities.

Ms. Meinholz requested recognition from the Chair for the purpose of a motion to take agenda items out of order. Chair Kutz stated that such a motion would be proper at this time. Ms. Meinholz moved, seconded by Mr. Fritter, to reverse the places on the agenda of items XI and VII. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Fritter noted under public comments that this week marked the execution of John Brown and cited a quote from Frederick Douglas which praised Brown’s commitment to the abolition of slavery.

Chair Kutz recognized Vice Chancellor Darrell Bazzell. Vice Chancellor Bazzell stated he was pleased to attend the final meeting of the Executive Committee for this calendar year and praised the work of the Executive Committee and the Congress regarding their progress.

Question was raised regarding the Grievance Panel and Hearing Officer procedures and if it would be feasible for a hardship fund to be created that would address the issue of the fees associated with an appeal at this level.

Mr. Patrick Sheehan of the Office of Human Resources clarified the normal costs of a filing fee and the daily fees associated with a hearing examiner.
Vice Chancellor Bazzell noted that in the past, Labor organizations picked up the costs involved. Vice Chancellor Bazzell stated that while the size of a paycheck should not be a barrier to pursuing a complaint, the charging of fees was implemented as a precaution against to guard against frivolous actions.

Discussion heard as to what constitutes a “frivolous” complaint and how big a problem do they pose. Discussion heard that pursuing grievances should not be put out of reach of those making the living wage who may lose a grievance appeal, even if it had merit, and still be liable for the associated costs. Discussion was heard that employees will find the money if they wish to pursue such action and such things as the availability of short term loans were referenced.

Objection was raised as to the use of the term “frivolous” and it was stated that the financial burden is borne by the employee to their determent, rather than Management.

Question was raised if ‘just cause’ would be affected by current legislation under debate or recently passed. Answer was in the negative.

The Vice Chancellor concluded that he was prepared to examine any reasonable proposal once the data is made available and examined.

Discussion was raised regarding the $1 million made available for employee compensation. Discussion was heard that fear exists that monies will be provided only to those on the basis of “rewarding performance”. Vice Chancellor Bazzell replied that employees who are at least “at standard” performance are eligible though an across the board adjustment cannot be made.

Discussion heard regarding the situation in which ongoing employees are asked to train new hires who are brought in at a higher salary than those conducting the training.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell stated that the administration will continue to work for the day when a pay adjustment can be offered to every employee. Vice Chancellor Bazzell noted that until that time, any resources that can be acquired for compensation will be utilized.

Discussion heard that when monetary compensation is not available, then demonstrations of respect are appreciated.

Vice Chancellor Bazzell stated that managers should be transparent about the availability of funds and how they will be allocated. Vice Chancellor Bazzell noted that the administration is being responsive in other ways as well, citing the allocation of an additional $9,000 for the Professional Development and Tuition Committee.

Discussion was heard that the dismantling of the civil service system by the State government mirrors some of the actions taken previously by campus administration. Vice Chancellor Bazzell responded that the intention of the institution can be distinguished from the State government and that accountability in the transactions is the key.
Vice Chancellor Bazzell was excused with the thanks of the Committee.

Chair Kutz recognized Vice Provost Ed Van Gemert for the purpose of providing a report on recommendations regarding library consolidation. Vice Provost Van Gemert provided background in regard to his experience with campus libraries. Discussion was heard in regard to the movement to digital material usage and the role of archival collections. Vice Provost Van Gemert noted that much of the 9 million volume collection is so little used that it is being proposed that print materials are being moved to central locations in order to re-purpose the spaces. Vice Provost Van Gemert informed the committee that print resources are experiencing a double digit decrease in circulation on an annual basis.

Discussion was heard regarding the vision and timeline of library consolidation noting the commitment not to layoff any employees.

Vice Provost Gemert concluded by informing the committee that the Library Committee had signed off on the consolidation plan.

Discussion was heard that while the library consolidation working group did not include University Staff it was hoped that University Staff would be part of the teams to be used in the process.

Question was raised as to why the Library Committee contains a provision that no library staff employees may serve on the committee. Vice Provost Van Gemert replied that he did not know the purpose of the provision other than it may have been to prevent a perceived conflict of interest.

Vice Provost Van Gemert was excused with the thanks of committee.

Chair Kutz recognized Associate Vice Chancellor Michael Bernard-Donals for the purpose of discussing the compensation fund.

Vice Chancellor Bernard-Donals noted that the money was allocated by full time employee head-count and that encouragement is being given to provide increases for those employees earning the lowest wages. Vice Chancellor Bernard-Donals noted that there was a desire to give as much discretion as possible to units.

Question was raised as to how much the measure of “reward by performance” will be utilized in making allocations for increases. Reply came that the memo distributed clearly states that a review of how funds are used will be conducted and may have an impact on future awards in terms of their being more specific instructions, in the event that these awards are not distributed with the proper discretion.

Discussion heard on the minimum increases that could be awarded, with 3% being the minimum.

Vice Chancellor Bernard-Donals was excused from the remainder of the meeting, appreciation was expressed by committee members who thanked Vice Chancellor Bernard – Donals for his advocacy on behalf of University Staff.
Chair Kutz opened discussion on the status of Executive Committee Seat 1, and recognized Mr. Fritter in this regard.

Mr. Fritter stated that his understanding was that the incumbent of Seat 1 is no longer holding a position on campus to which she has to actively report, and as she is not affected by the policies of the campus, the incumbent of Seat 1 should consider relinquishing her seat to the next eligible person on the poll list.

Mr. Fritter moved, seconded by Ms. Meinholz, to request that the incumbent of Seat 1 consider relinquishing her seat to the next eligible candidate.

Clarification provided by OHR that a person on extended sabbatical is still considered an ongoing employee.

Discussion heard that if you are not reporting for work, or are functioning as the direct report to a specific supervisor, or have an active email, desk or phone number then you are no longer in the category you started in.

Reply came that taking banked leave time does not change the status of the employee.

Discussion heard that the debate on this issue is inappropriate as it is concerning a personnel matter and not fit for an open session of the committee meeting.

Objection heard that the verification of the status of an employee wishing to serve in shared governance is appropriate in accordance with the bylaws and to ensure that they are being complied with.

Discussion heard that the incumbent meets the standards to hold the seat as they are considered an “active employee”.

Mr. Newton was excused for the remainder of the meeting.

Objection heard that an “active employee” is one who reports for work and is subject to personnel and campus policies.

Discussion heard that while the technical aspects of the bylaws provisions are being met, a person on extended sabbatical is not subject to the rigors of the workplace and is not in the best position to represent the constituents of their district or the campus as a whole.

Objection heard that campus rules do apply to an any employee who is considered an “active employee” and that the incumbent of Seat 1 meets those criteria.

Clarification that the motion does not compel the incumbent to do anything but consider stepping down so the next highest vote getter can serve.

Roll call vote on the motion was requested.

MOTION FAILED.

Ms. Meinholz moved, seconded by Mr. Fritter, to adjourn the meeting. MOTION FAILED.

Chair Kutz recognized Mr. Jake Rebholz, Congressional Liaison, for a report on the December Congressional Agenda. Mr. Rebholz noted that the Congressional Bylaws would be up for a discussion period in December and a vote in January. Mr. Rebholz noted that this stood in contrast to those who indicated the Bylaws Committee was not capable of meeting the desired deadlines.

Chair Kutz noted the upcoming December HR Design sessions and encouraged committee members to participate.

At 4:00PM, Ms. Hilmanowski moved, seconded by Ms. Droles, to adjourn the meeting. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Minutes prepared and submitted by: J. Lease / Secretary