

MINUTES
Personnel Policies Procedures & Communications Committee
10.19.22

MEMBERS PRESENT: C. Stodd, C. Armour, H. Stone, C. Varrige

MEMBERS ABSENT: C. Rohde-Szudy (EXCUSED)

OTHERS PRESENT: J. Karls Ruplinger, P. Sheehan, T. Fritter

At 2PM, Chair Stodd called the meeting to order and instructed the Secretary to record all of those present.

Chair Stodd paused for public comments. Mr. Terry Fritter noted that it was on this day in 1781 that British General Cornwallis surrendered 8,000 men at Yorktown, effectively ending the Revolutionary War.

Chair Stodd directed the attention of the Committee to the draft Minutes of the previous meeting. Ms. Varrige moved, seconded by Ms. Stone, to approve the Minutes. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Chair Stodd recognized Mr. Patrick Sheehan and Ms. Jessica Karls Ruplinger for the purpose of providing a report regarding remote work agreements. Ms. Karls Ruplinger discussed the 7 guidelines used by Colleges, Schools and Divisions to analyze operational needs in considering remote work requests. Aspects of workplace culture, flexibility, and how compensation and benefits as well as remote work options all impact recruitment and retention.

Question was raised if employees have a method to appeal the denial of a remote work request. Reply came that a review can be requested by the Vice Chair or the Director of a Division, College, or School.

Concern was expressed that management is unlikely to contradict a decision made by a supervisor. Discussion was heard that an employee could file a grievance that the policy is not being adhered to. Concern was expressed that requested remote workdays are not applied fairly, but rather granted at the will of the supervisor depending on their personal opinion of the employee. Reply came that days sought occasionally conflict with operational needs. Discussion was heard that managers may be reluctant to approve remote workdays when leave requests would be more appropriate. Discussion was heard that remote work is not intended to take place of such things as ongoing childcare needs and there are differences since the conclusion of the pandemic, when schools and day care were not operating and available.

Concern was expressed regarding the perceived disparity between units, in which some people are working remote 4 days a week, and others in similar positions are working remote only 1 day, and that there is confusion about who has the power to approve or deny such requests. Discussion was heard that employees have the option of moving to units where greater tolerance for remote work has been demonstrated.

Reply came that local management is most in tune with their operational needs. It was acknowledged that those seeking accommodating remote work schedules may, "vote with their feet."

Question was raised if there was any data to support employees departing due to failure to obtain remote work agreements. Reply came that there is anecdotal evidence and higher than normal turnover has been observed in some departments. There is an effort to standardize exit interviews in order to create a greater understanding of motivations.

Question was raised if information has been collected in order to identify trends. Reply came that a remote work survey is being prepared.

Question was raised regarding the departments asking people to work remotely and if supervisors have been provided training to manage workplaces that are split between remote and in person workers. Reply came that available office space has driven some considerations and resources are available to both employees and supervisors regarding hybrid workplaces.

Discussion was heard that some hired during the pandemic are permanent remote employees and this has been viewed negatively by those who are long time employees and have returned to campus but are not compensated. Reply came that very few positions are entirely remote and even those who are out of State are occasionally brought to campus. It was noted that Divisions are being scrutinized for consistency.

Discussion was heard that some language in the policy paints with a broad brush. Question was raised if current employees who move will be offered the same remote opportunities as those who were hired out of State. Reply came that if the position were to lend itself to remote work that it would be an appropriate conversation. It was also acknowledged that the policy may need greater clarification and that it would be beneficial to the supervisor to strongly consider any remote requests.

At 2:52PM, Ms. Armour moved, seconded by Ms. Stone, to adjourn the meeting. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Minutes prepared and submitted by: J. Lease / Secretary