

Operating Staff Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Members in Attendance: Slava Bruder, Jennifer Dube, Holly Hillsgrove, Matty Leighton (Vice Chair and Recorder), Patrice MacNevin, Laurie Anne Malizia, Doreen Palmer (UNHM), Janice Pierson, Brian Tobin (UNHM), Toni Searles

Members Not in Attendance: Lisa Wilder, Jason Brodeur (Chair)

Guests: Sharon Demers, HR; Lon Sattler, SPCC

Agenda Items

Welcome/Approval of Minutes – Matty Leighton

The February minutes were approved, as edited, by acclamation.

Communication Boards – Matty Leighton and Patrice MacNevin

Matty has proceeded with the production of materials for the boards after receiving a go-ahead from Jason. She purchased materials for the boards at a cost of \$31.90, and we will also have to reimburse the Department of Family Studies for color printing and colored file folders. Matty expects to have the materials completed early next week.

HR Update – Sharon Demers

Sharon said that she had received Matty's budget for the communication boards, and she didn't see any reason why it wouldn't be approved. She did express concern that the boards will need to be maintained over time, and that we will need to touch base with managers before installation and periodically after that. Matty and Patrice reiterated that they will try and recruit managers or staff members in each area to stock the take-away materials. We may want to review the boards every six months or so and refresh the display with new paper, different graphics, etc. This would be relatively inexpensive. Sharon also informed the council that there will be a new initiative focusing on wellness throughout the USNH system. Each campus will have its own wellness ambassador, and there will be educational presentations and other communications efforts, which will mesh well with the communication board project. Council members raised the question of adding an additional page to the annual performance evaluation that would allow colleagues other than an employee's supervisor to comment on their evaluation. Many staff members work with and support multiple people, and it would be helpful to have input from a whole spectrum of individuals rather than just the employee's immediate supervisor. This raises the question of who identifies the additional colleagues – would the supervisor solicit submissions? Would the employee ID individuals with whom he or she works? It might work best if the employee and supervisor worked together on this. One advantage of adding this component is that it could provide additional documentation of the employee's strengths and weaknesses. This might also fit well with the 360-degree evaluation that has been suggested several times. The council will send Sharon a reminder e-mail and Sharon will look at both options for the next evaluation cycle.

One employee asked what sort of follow-up HR does on performance assessments. For example, do they check with other managers we work with to see what their input is? Sharon replied that it's not possible to do that sort of follow-up because of the enormous amount of time that would be involved. It isn't feasible.

Library Council Update – Holly Hillsgrove

Holly updated the council on the recent Library Staff Council meeting, where they invited representatives from the PAT and OS Councils. Holly was the OS Council representative, while Mary Essley was the PAT representative. Staff at that meeting expressed an urgent need for the OS Council to step up its presence on campus by soliciting staff opinions and acting on them. Other topics that came up during the meeting included the rising cost of benefits and the concern that it is difficult to get information on the activities of the University System Personnel Policy Council (SPPC). For the record, the SPPC membership list, agendas, handouts, and minutes are available at <http://www.usnh.edu/hr/sppc.html>.

SPPC Update – Lonn Sattler

Lonn updated the council on the following issues:

- Shift Differential - The SPPC is still gathering data on shift differential pay from comparator organizations. There is a strong feeling that we will find that we are out of line with the rest of the industry. Sharon Demers commented that implementation of new shift differential pay, if needed, would probably take place in Fiscal Year 2010. Of course the university system would like to move on this issue as quickly as possible, but the change will require updating multiple computer systems and making significant changes to the budget, which unfortunately takes time.
- FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) – The federal law regarding FMLA has been changed to allow up to 26 months leave for employees caring for a family member injured while on active military duty. The university system is therefore updating its policy to come into line with federal law.
- Termination Policy – The SPPC is still looking at the notification period for OS and PAT in the case of involuntary separation not due to performance issues. It's unclear what the industry standard is. The biggest question is whether or not there should be a difference in the policy for OS and PAT.
- Total Compensation Package for FY'09 – The university system is still trying to decide how to award the new annual distribution of \$500 per employee to offset the rising cost of benefits. Lonn provided a handout (included in these minutes as Appendix A) with details about the different accounts that might be used. The three different types of accounts are FSA – Flexible Spending Account, HRA – Health Reimbursement Account, and HSA – Health Savings Account. We already have FSAs available to us for health care and child care expenses. They allow contributions from the employee as well as the employer, and they will pay for health care costs in advance of the money being deposited in the account; however, they don't allow employees to carry a balance over from one year to another. HRAs have the advantage of allowing unused account balances to be carried forward to the following year, but they cannot pay an employee in advance of funds being deposited in the account, and they are funded by employer contributions only. HSAs are portable, which means an employee can take the account with them if they leave UNH, and they allow employee and employer contributions, but they are typically available only to employees who participate in a high-deductible health plan. USNH will probably choose to use an HRA, with the requirement that the employee use all the funds in their FSA before they dip into HRA funds.

AOP Feedback – Janice Pierson

Janice asked the council if they had received feedback from constituents regarding this year's AOP Conference. While many of the council members related positive personal experiences at the conference, they didn't have a lot of constituent feedback to convey. Janice is particularly interested in hearing how people felt about the conference in light of some of the problems they had with cancellations. Please forward any feedback you may receive to her.

OS Survey – Matty Leighton

Matty encouraged all the council members to give their constructive criticism regarding Jason's distribution of an Operating Staff survey last week. She asked participants to keep the discussion as productive as possible. The following points were raised:

- We should use consensus-based decision making whenever feasible. This means that the entire council should be given a chance to review employee communications before they are delivered, even if this is done via e-mail with a very short turn-around deadline. This creates a paper trail and eliminates any "whiff of impropriety" if we are questioned about our actions later.
- The tempest that has surrounded the survey has obscured our original intent, which was to gather information from our constituents and use it to advocate for them. We need to move on towards our original goal.
- We need to remember that every time we communicate with all of our constituents, we need to include a non-electronic component for those employees who don't have access to computers.
- We should make hard copies of the surveys available again to facilitate input from people who had reservations about using the electronic format.

- It may be appropriate to communicate with our constituents about the intent of the survey, the intent of Question 8 (it appears to have an anti-union bias, which was not the intent), and what exactly a “summary report” means (employees had concerns that this meant we were going to give raw data to HR or USNH administration).
- What about hourly, non-status employees? Should they receive the survey?
- Janice Pierson suggested that we adopt language on consensus decision-making similar to that found in the bylaws of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women (attached as Appendix B).

Based on the discussion, the council agreed on the following action points.

1. We reaffirm that our primary concern is what is best for our constituents, regardless of our personal opinions.
2. Employee confidentiality is paramount to us in any situation where we solicit feedback.
3. We do not take a side on the union issue. Our role is to continue as a conduit for information and employee communication.
4. We need to explain the rationale behind the survey and how it was administered.
5. We need to reiterate to our constituents that we are an independent, employee-run and governed group that represents their best interests.
6. We need to offer an opportunity for any individuals who have not done so to complete the original survey.
7. Some of the employee communication that is needed will have to take place before the next meeting.

Constituent Request – Slava Bruder

Slava relayed a request from constituent Kelly Hinton that the OS Council publish all letters to the editor from the Campus Journal on our web page. Because the meeting had already reached its time limit, this subject was tabled and will be addressed at the next council meeting.

Meeting at Manchester Campus – Doreen Palmer and Brian Tobin

Doreen and Brian told the council that they have reserved the room for the meeting and arranged for guest parking. They’ve already received responses from five or six constituents, and they expect that there will be a significant number of guests at the meeting. Council members who are interested may stay for a tour of the UNH-M facility after the meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM. The next OSC meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, April 9th at 1:00 PM at the Manchester Campus.

OS Council web site: <http://www.unh.edu/os-council/>

PAT Council web site: <http://www.unh.edu/pat-council/>

SPPC web site: <http://www.usnh.edu/hr/sppc.html>

Appendix A

Comparison of FSA, HRA and HSA

FEATURE	FSA	HRA	HSA
Funding Source	Employee and/or Employer (flex credits)	Employer Only	Employee and/or Employer
Funding Limits	No federally mandated maximum but employers may establish a limit	No federally mandated maximum but typically set as a portion of the deductible	Lesser of plan deductible or \$2,650 (\$5,250 for families) indexed and annually adjusted
Core Medical Plan Design Limits	None	No regulatory limits but almost always a high deductible plan	A \$1,050 medical plan minimum deductible
Portable	No	Usually No	Yes
Rollover/Potential for Funding Retiree Medical	No	Usually No	Yes
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiar to employees and employers • Well-developed marketplace • Account can be funded with employee and employer contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts do not have to be funded • Unused account balances may be carried forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unused account balances may be carried forward • Accounts are portable • Accounts can be funded with employee and employer contributions
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unused account balances are forfeited each year • Accounts are not portable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts funded with employer contributions only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts must be sufficiently funded to cover withdrawals • HSA Regulations • Inability to carve-out pharmacy benefits (1/06)

Appendix B

Sample language from Policies and Procedures of the President's Commission on the Status of Women:

V. Meetings

D. Decision Making

1. Consensus model

Decisions of the commission will be made by a consensus of a quorum of the membership. Consensus is defined as reaching a decision that is most beneficial for the group as a whole through considering all the many viewpoints and concerns of the group. Consensus implies that each individual within the group respects differences and is willing to reconsider their own position to move toward a position that everyone in the group can support.

2. Voting

If consensus cannot be reached on a question, assuming that a quorum of members is present, the membership may agree to vote. At least 51% of the members present must agree to change to a voting process. If this change is agreed upon, a decision can be made only with a 60% majority vote.