

## **Operating Staff Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday, May 14, 2008**

**Members in Attendance:** Jason Brodeur (Chair), Slava Bruder, Jennifer Dube, Holly Hillsgrove, Matty Leighton (Vice Chair and Recorder), Patrice MacNevin, Doreen Palmer (UNHM), Janice Pierson, Toni Searles, Brian Tobin (UNHM), Lisa Wilder

**Members Not in Attendance:** Laurrie Anne Malizia

**Guests:** Ann Boylan, Prospective Council Member; Jodi Record, Campus Journal; Lonn Sattler, SPCC

### **Agenda Items**

#### **Approval of April Minutes – Jason Brodeur**

Although Matty typed up the minutes from last month's meeting, she forgot to distribute them before she left on medical leave. She will distribute them immediately after the meeting.

#### **Welcome/Introductions – Jason Brodeur**

The council welcomed Ann Boylan from Housekeeping, who indicated she was interested in joining the council. Jason also took the opportunity to remind the council members that this would be his last meeting, as he has taken a new position with the UNH Foundation and will no longer be an operating staff member. This leaves three council seats open.

#### **Human Resources Update and Discussion – Sharon Demers**

**SIP** – Sharon addressed the concern of some council members that there is an appearance of impropriety in cases where employees take SIP and then are hired back as hourly staff in the same position, at the same rate of pay. She reminded the council that there has never been a prohibition against individuals retiring (routinely or through SIP) and returning as hourly employees. Even if a SIP retiree returns as an hourly employee, there is still a savings to the university. When a position is filled with an hourly employee rather than a status employee, there is a substantial savings, as the university must fund approximately 50% more total compensation dollars for each benefited position than they do for each hourly, non-status position. Also, SIP allows departments to reevaluate positions and decide whether they can be eliminated, combined with another position, reduced to part-time, or filled with a different classification of employee.

Council members expressed the concern that in some cases there is a detrimental effect on employees who remain in a lower-level position when an employee takes SIP and then is hired back on a part-time, non-status basis. Obviously the same amount of work still needs to be done, some of which then falls on the remaining full-time employee. At the same time, that remaining employee is prevented from advancing because the higher-level position is back-filled with the SIP retiree who has returned as a non-status employee.

There was also a council member concern that some communications about SIP had set the expectation that the program was intended to improve advancement opportunities for employees. It was the consensus of Sharon and other council members that this was not the intent of SIP. The language in question will be located and forwarded to HR, and, if necessary, there will be additional communications to adjust employee expectations.

**Changes to Non-Status Positions** – The university is considering some changes to non-status positions. The intent of these changes is to prevent the university from taking advantage of individuals by hiring them for very long periods in non-status positions. If a business unit needs long-term, full-time employees, then those employees should be offered status positions. The pending changes will set some sort of limit on full-time, non-status employment, requiring business units to convert a non-status position to a status position if it is filled with a 76%-100%-time, non-status employee for more than a set period of time (i.e., three years). It is also possible that non-status employees who are full-time will receive limited benefits.

Council members asked how HR would track the length of time that individuals remain in non-status positions. This can be done through the BSCs, using Banner, with follow-up from HR. There was also a concern that current non-status employees who met the criteria would not be converted to status in a timely manner. HR is looking at how to handle employees whose tenure exceeds the new limits (whatever they may be) at the time the change is approved, and will put a process in place to address the issue.

The council asked some questions about compensation, and Sharon provided the following answers:

Question: How and when is hourly salary information made public?

Answer: Salary information is made public when the university receives a request under the Freedom of Information Act. Salary information is available on the HR web site.

Question: How often does the University System of New Hampshire review upper-level management? And who does it? Are we top-heavy?

Answer: Review of upper-level management structure and compensation is the responsibility of Vice President Dick Cannon. VP Cannon works closely with the president and the president's advisors to monitor these issues. It is difficult for those of us who work at the campus level to understand the university's upper-level management needs.

### **Sick Pool**

Patrice MacNevin has requested that the council advocate a change in sick pool policy to better accommodate employees whose work schedules leave them with little or no Earned Time to convert in May. Sharon encouraged the council to draft a resolution asking the university to allow sick pool conversion twice per year. During the discussion of sick pool, there was a suggestion that the university also consider allowing employees to cash out sick pool time if they have a large numbers of hours banked. A council member also suggested that sick pool time should be available for employees who are caring for an adult child. Sharon was confident that cash-outs will not be allowed, and she said that the university follows FMLA law whenever possible in terms of what family member care is covered. FMLA defines children as under 18 and living at home, or as individuals who are ADA-eligible.

Other questions that came up during the sick pool discussion:

Question: Is it possible to change the policy so that an employee can use it before they are out five days?

Answer: If the council drafts language around this, it can be presented to the SPPC. However, Sharon suggested that the council pick the issue that is most important and focus on it, rather than drafting proposals to change several things.

Question: If you are part-time and work fewer than 7.5 hours per day, when does sick pool kick in?

Answer: When you have been out five of your regular work days, no matter how long those days are. Sharon will double-check this.

Question: How much time should employees put into sick pool? Is it an advantage? Should the council encourage employees to use sick pool?

Advantage: Choosing to put time into sick pool is a personal decision, but most people do put at least some time in. It could be a good idea to do some information sessions or workshops around open enrollment, because it seems that many employees do not understand how the benefit works.

The council agreed that it is most important to expand the ability of **all** employees to use the benefit before we try to expand **how** they can use it. Therefore, Patrice and Matty will draft a resolution to change the sick pool conversion period to twice per year and present it at the next council meeting. The other concerns will be tabled for later consideration.

**Hiring Freeze** – The hiring freeze affects any and all non-grant-funded, benefited positions that are currently open and any that open up going forward, and will remain in effect indefinitely. The council was adamant in expressing its concern that communication about the freeze was badly mishandled. Many employees had not received any communication from the university, and learned about the freeze from the article in the Union Leader. This is an example of how the seeds of “us vs. them” feelings are planted among employees. The president and the administration need to understand that situations like this are a great opportunity for them to show how much they value employees by including them in decision-making and communicating with them immediately when tough decisions are made. In the future, it is imperative the administration make employee communication a priority.

### **Elections – Jason Brodeur**

In his final action as chair, Jason asked the council to vote on new officers. Matty Leighton, council vice chair and recorder, agreed to run for the position of chair. Slava Bruder agreed to run as vice chair.

Matty was elected chair in a unanimous voice vote, 10 for/0 against.

Slava was elected vice chair in a unanimous voice vote, 10 for/0 against.

The council also agreed via voice vote that Matty would retain the position of recorder.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM. The next OSC meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM in the Trustees’ Board Room in T-Hall, and President Huddleston will be the guest speaker.

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>