

Minutes

Monday, August 15, 2011

2:00pm-3:00pm

Falk Room 1100 Marie Mount Hall

Present: Marcy Marinelli (Chair of the Campus Affairs Committee), Charles Fenster (Chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee), and Steve Petkas (Chair of the Staff Affairs Committee)

Conference Call: Eric Kasischke (Chair of the University Senate)

Excused: Rachel Cooper (Chair of the Student Affairs Committee)

Senate Staff Present: Chelsea Benincasa (Coordinator of the Staff Affairs Committee), Glen Fuhrmeister (Coordinator of Campus Affairs, Faculty Affairs, and Student Affairs Committees)

The Chairs of the Campus Affairs, Faculty Affairs, and Staff Affairs Committees met to discuss the proposal entitled, "Making UMD a Great Place to Work Initiative," which was submitted to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) by a faculty member (Dr. Stephen McDaniel) in April 2011. Rachel Cooper, Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, was unable to attend the meeting.

Eric Kasischke joined the conversation via conference call to give his perspective of the issues at hand. Kasischke thanked the chairs for meeting about this proposal, and he asked them to provide their suggestions on elements that should be included in a charge regarding this proposal. In April 2011, the SEC had voted to ask the Faculty Affairs, Staff Affairs, and Campus Affairs Committee Chairs to determine how the issue should be reviewed. Kasischke explained his rationale for wanting to include Cooper, because of the issues that teaching assistants (TA's) and graduate assistants (GA's) face in regard to their work environments, benefits, the cost of living in the DC metro area, and their salary levels. He also mentioned that it may be beneficial to contact the President of the Graduate Student Government (GSG), Anna Bedford, as she may have a better understanding of the situation for graduate students, as well as be able to gather information from current GA's. He spoke briefly about the need for more communication between the Senate, the Student Government Association (SGA), and the Graduate Student Government (GSG) in general.

Prior to the meeting, Kasischke had sent a memo to the four chairs with his initial thoughts on the issue. In the memo, he explained his reasons for asking the chairs to conduct a preliminary review. Kasischke noted that there have been a number of Senate-related activities over the past several years that are related to quality of workplace issues, and the Senate has been asked to conduct further review of several new issues that also fall into this arena (e.g., issues with non-exempt staff and non-tenured faculty, in particular). Steve Petkas referenced the proposal submitted by the Senate Staff Affairs Committee in the spring of 2011 regarding non-exempt staff members. It was confirmed that the most recent proposal from McDaniel was not the only driving force in bringing staff and faculty work environment issues to the SEC's attention.

During the chairs' deliberations, Kasischke asked that they answer the following three questions:

1. What issues do the different employee categories (e.g., graduate assistants, non-exempt staff, exempt staff, tenured faculty, non-tenured faculty, upper administrators [e.g., Chairs and above] currently face?

2. Should the University address these issues (a) individually as they are brought forward, or (b) in an integrated fashion?
3. If 2(b), then how should the recommendations for addressing the issues be formulated (e.g., through a Senate Task Force, Joint President-Senate Task Force, etc.)

The chairs thanked Kasischke for his initial thoughts, and Kasischke left the conversation.

Petkas discussed the University of Michigan's "Building Great Places to Work" program, as referenced in McDaniel's proposal. He noted that Michigan's program actually began in their human resources department, rather than the Senate. The chairs discussed the aspects of the proposal submitted by McDaniel. They agreed that data collection on the working conditions on campus is an essential first step to tackling this issue.

The chairs also discussed the issues with staff and faculty morale on campus. A copy of a memo from Provost Ann Wylie regarding the status of the HR Working Group that is looking into the recent concerns of staff members, particularly from Facilities Management, was also distributed. The chairs agreed that the need for "a safe and respectful work and learning environment for all faculty, staff, and students" is imperative, as noted in Provost Wylie's memo dated July 26, 2011. The different constituencies on campus clearly have different work conditions depending on their job category, but morale is a huge factor and efforts should be made to create a balance across the campus in all constituencies.

In regard to Question 1, the chairs brainstormed a number of issues that the multiple employee categories currently face, including concerns based on UHR rules, managerial/supervisory issues, hostile work environments, pay rate and salary compression issues, benefits, leave, insurance, and retirement concerns, barriers in communication, growth and advancement opportunities, work/life balance, loyalty, and overall climate issues with safety and respect.

In regard to Question 2, the chairs decided that employee issues and concerns should be addressed in an integrated fashion, taking into consideration the differences of each constituent area. Ultimately, the overall concerns could be broken down by group as extensively as desired; for example a full breakdown could include:

1. Graduate Students – Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, etc.
2. Non-Exempt Staff – Service & Maintenance, Clerical, Technical/Para-Professional, Skilled Crafts
3. Exempt Staff – Professional, EAMs (Executive, Administration, Managerial)
4. Contingent Staff (Contingent I and II)
5. Tenured Faculty – Assistant Professor/Agent, Associate Professor/Senior Agent, Full Professor/Principle Agent
6. Non-Tenured Faculty – Adjunct and Affiliate Faculty, Research Faculty, Teaching Faculty, Visiting Faculty, Professor of the Practice, Emeriti, Lecturers, Field Faculty, College Park Professors
7. Librarians – Librarian I, II, III, and IV
8. Upper Administrators (e.g., Department Chairs and above)

The chairs noted that there are also issues related to length of appointment (e.g., 9-month/22 pay period employees vs. 12-month/26 pay period employees), which could be looked into, as well. Note that the chairs are uncertain about getting into undergraduate employee issues, since they fall under a very different type of group in comparison to all of the other aforementioned groups.

In regard to Question 3, the chairs agreed that creating a joint Senate-Presidential Task Force to look into the issues raised by McDaniel and the Staff Affairs Committee is the best way to move forward. The chairs also noted that a review of these issues will likely span multiple years and will have to survive the changeover of committee memberships, including the SEC.

The chairs also agreed on the following suggestions to be submitted to Kasischke for consideration when developing a charge:

1. A Joint Senate-Presidential Task Force should be appointed and created to conduct a review. The Task Force should include members of the Senate Campus Affairs, Faculty Affairs, Staff Affairs, and Student Affairs Committees. Likewise, it could include the President of the Graduate Student Government (GSG), members of University Human Resources (UHR), regular staff and faculty members, Ombuds Officers, and other administrators as appropriate.

2. The Task Force should be charged with identifying issues that are likely to be found across the entire community of employees, and other issues that are focused in particular groups, for purposes of surveying and data collection (e.g., the themes brainstormed for Question 1). The Task Force could also be asked to consider the following questions:

- a) What prevents our faculty and staff from characterizing the University of Maryland as a great place to work?
- b) What enables our faculty and staff to characterize Maryland as a great place to work?

In order to direct examination toward those dimensions of employees' experiences at Maryland, the Task Force could work within the broad categories of (1) Opportunities, (2) Meaning of Work, (3) Working Conditions, (4) Interpersonal Relationships, (5) Organizational Policies/Administration, and (6) Compensation, attending to the following:

- Opportunities for achievement
- Opportunities for advancement
- Opportunities for professional/skill development
- Meaning of work: relationship of work to organizational/institutional mission
- Meaning of work: recognition for good/superlative work
- Working conditions: safety
- Working conditions: appropriately equipped and stationed
- Interpersonal relationships: superiors/supervisors
- Interpersonal relationships: peers and co-workers
- Organizational policies/administration: available information, fairness and problem solving
- Organizational policies/administration: Work/Life balance
- Organizational policies/administration: perception of job security
- Compensation: salary or wages
- Compensation: benefits

3. The Task Force should look into all available data sources and surveys from other entities (including possible review of the results from the “UMD Faculty Work Environment Survey Inquiry” survey, which was conducted by the ADVANCE Program for Inclusive Excellence in April 2011). Additionally, the Task Force could be asked to conduct focus groups or create other surveys for assessing employee opinion. The chairs noted that focus groups might be too costly and/or time consuming, but that participation in surveys would need to be amplified in order for the results to be broad enough for assessment without focus groups.

4. The Task Force should create an actionable strategy to begin addressing workplace issues, as needed, based on their findings. Subcommittees could be created for further examination of the different constituencies or themes. The plan could include a collaborative effort of multiple programs/units on campus. NOTE: Any suggested changes pertaining to staff members who are part of the collective bargaining unit could be recommended for consideration in the next go around of negotiations between the University and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), as appropriate. No changes to policies or benefits for employees covered by collective bargaining may occur until after such negotiations take place.

5. The institution’s data should be compared to its peers (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, UNC at Chapel Hill, University of California, Berkeley, UCLA, and University of Michigan) as well as to other schools within the University of Maryland System (Bowie State, Towson University, etc.).