

2011-12 UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

OCTOBER 7, 2011

P&A SENATE MINUTES: No. 1

The first meeting of the P&A Senate for 2011-12 was convened in 1-451 Moss Tower on Friday, October 7, 2011, at 9:33 a.m. Coordinate campuses were linked by ITV. Checking or signing the roll as present were 25 P&A members and 8 alternates. Chair Steven Pearthree presided.

1. P&A CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Steven Pearthree, Chair of the P&A Senate, said that he had been invited and attended many events in September. They included the home opener football game with other University governance leaders, Provost candidate interviews, Senate Business & Rules Committee, and the Senate Committee Chairs meeting, convocation, and the inauguration of President Kaler to represent P&A employees.

He noted that the Senate Consultative Committee (SCC) is looking at the procedure for the four senates involvement in administrator searches. It was previously proposed that each of the four consultative committees would be involved in administrative searches. Professor Cramer, Senate Consultative Committee (SCC)/ Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) chair, asked each consultative committee consider using just the SCC, as leadership from each senate sits on this committee. The proposal is being drafted and will be discussed at the October SCC meeting.

Chair Pearthree then stated that he attended the September Regents meeting during which Vice President Brown presented employment data and ways it can be collected and collated. She also suggested that a new enterprise system might be needed separate from PeopleSoft.

The P&A Consultative Committee (PACC) discussed Senate minutes and their inclusion in the University's Digital Conservancy at the last meeting. Members agreed that past minutes should be included but wished to maintain the current year's minutes on the P&A Senate site as a way to get more people to the new site. The minutes could then be uploaded to the conservancy at the end of the academic year. PACC will re-examine this process for next year.

At the September 28 PACC meeting, President Kaler was a guest and the committee had a good dialogue with him. He talked about being more effective and efficient, excellence, access, diversity, and advocacy. He believes that there is one thing that each employees does that they could stop doing without impacting the institutions, which would then leave time for other activities. The committee asked how they could help tell the P&A story and how to affect structural and cultural change.

Chair Pearthree said that he asked President Kaler about a temporary salary reduction or furlough taking place again. President Kaler said that these options have not been ruled out but that he does not want to do either option as it affects employee morale. When the University received additional funding this biennium from the state, some was saved in case there are future cuts. He will be attending the December 2 P&A Senate meeting.

2. P&A SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Benefits and Compensation (B&C) Subcommittee

Frank Douma noted that B&C will be meeting the third Thursday at 9:00 am. At the first meeting they brainstormed questions for President Kaler, started the work plan, and received updates from Nan Wilhelmson and Jackie Singer.

Chair Pearthree stated that Gavin Watt, Chair of the Benefits Advisory Committee (BAC), will be at the November P&A Senate meeting.

Communications Subcommittee

Danny Sussman stated that the Communications Subcommittee will be meeting on the third Thursday of the month. Priorities for the year include revising the new employee orientation power point to include more about the role of the P&A, conducting a P&A survey, and looking at the role of the P&A newsletter and social media to tell more about what P&A do and spread P&A stories that are already being written.

Outreach Subcommittee

Stacey Grimes stated that the Outreach Subcommittee met last week. They will be working to fill the open seat from the AHC, filling all open alternate seats, and adding questions to the P&A survey. Lastly she noted that in early spring semester the P&A Senate Chair-elect will be elected and she encouraged people to consider running for the position.

Professional Development and Recognition (PD&R) Subcommittee

Scott Gilbert said that PD&R met this week to develop a plan for the year. At the PACC meeting, President Kaler informed members that he had not yet signed off on the changes to the teaching award policy as he wanted the Provost to clarify the policy as to which employees were eligible for the award. Brown bags will start in November and the Outstanding Unit Award (OUA) is planned again for spring semester.

3. DISCUSSION WITH PROFESSOR CHRISTOPHER CRAMER Chair, Faculty Consultative Committee

Professor Christopher Cramer, Chair of the Senate and Faculty Consultative Committees (SCC and FCC), joined the meeting. He had been presented a few questions in advance from Chair Pearthree. Responses to these questions will be shared and then he said that he would be happy to field additional questions from the members.

Q. What are the top 3 issues facing FCC this year?

A: The first is communication. How can a seemingly disinterested public be encouraged to pay attention to University activities, with the goal of articulating more clearly the benefits to the state that accrue from taxpayer investment in higher education, and particularly investment in a research University? The second is accountability and productivity. How are these best defined, measured, and communicated to outside stakeholders? As part of this, how is the post-tenure review process for faculty working, or failing to work? The third issues is size and scope of the University? What is the University doing well and what should the University stop doing so that resources can be redirected to maintain or strengthen remaining programs. Particularly in the area of graduate education, how does the redesign of the Graduate School improve administration and functioning of graduate education?

Q: What does he see as the top issues facing P&A employees?

A: First he would like to say that he is probably more aware than most faculty of the P&A classification and issues as his wife is a P&A employee. Like the FCC, communication is the first issue. How can a faceless group of evil “administrators” be turned into a collage of individuals all performing mission-critical tasks of great value? Especially when the sheer diversity of those tasks is hard to comprehend. Accountability and productivity are the second issues as well. How are these best defined, measured, and communicated to outside stakeholders? Are appropriate evaluation and management practices in place to reward superior performance and provide solutions for inadequate performance? During periods of retrenchment, protecting incapable people from termination serves only to place pressure on positions that are filled by competent employees. The last issues he sees for P&A is Human Resources strategic planning including better career management for P&A employees throughout the enterprise, clear job titles and ladders for advancement, and fostering greater open-mindedness with respect to internal mobility.

Q: How can the FCC and PACC work together?

A: Faculty and P&A staff are similarly affected by any number of University policies and decisions, and can benefit from mutual experiences in providing consultative feedback to the administration when it is solicited, which is hopefully often. This is one reason why many Senate committees include multiple employee classes and sometimes students.

To be blunt, faculty, by their nature, have a greater tendency to see themselves more as free agents and less as part of a greater University community. Faculty also jealously guard their privileged governance status that they believe to be founded on expectations that each faculty member be committed to all three missions of the University - teaching, research, and public engagement. That being said, it is foolish to imagine that the University can move forward as a great institution without ensuring an environment where every employee is offered the best possible environment to succeed and excel, and improvements for any one group are likely to redound to all. As SCC chair, he believes constant communication between all consultative committee chairs should be undertaken in order to use SCC as an engine for cooperative handling of critical issues.

Q: What does he see as the role of governance during time of transition in senior leadership?

A: Governance needs to be patient, be respectful, be frank and forthright, be open minded about new initiatives but cannot hesitate to defend the existing system when experience suggests that it is in fact optimal. Governance also needs to build trust with the new administration, and convey a desire for everyone to win, not for one group to win over another. Governance also needs to work hard to keep constituents informed and to carry their concerns to the administration when warranted. Everyone needs to recognize that the golden age is over, if it ever really existed, and help the administration develop strategies to cope.

Q: Are there inefficiencies and how can governance be improved?

A: Some committees are overburdened with real and important issues. Others are occasionally hunting for agendas without any real need to spend faculty, staff, and administrative time. Hard-nosed culling of topics by committee chairs has value. Using administrators’ time as wisely as possible builds good will. He is personally open to suggestions from other venues.

Chair Pearthree thanked Professor Cramer for answering his questions. He then asked members of any additional questions.

Q: How can the University counter the argument that all P&A are administrators?

A: There is a problem with the current data as everyone is lumped into a few classes. It is critical that the University make clear what employees actually do by promoting more stories on different employees. He would propose featuring these stories on the University homepage as getting people to read these stories is part of the issue.

Q: Do faculty truly understand the value of P&A employees?

A: Part of this is an internal communication issue. Faculty are more attuned to what P&A do as work done by unfilled P&A positions has fallen to faculty to complete. Governance has a role to play in helping faculty understand.

Q: What are his views on President Kaler not yet approving the changes to the teaching awards?

A: He was an ardent supporter of this change both at FCC and at the Faculty Senate where he spoke in favor of the change as he believes that all people who teach, regardless of classification, should be able to be recognized. He will be following up on this issue as he had not heard about it before today's meeting.

Q: Do other faculty support the teaching award change?

A: There was overwhelming support in the Faculty Senate.

Q: What does he see as measures for success? Are there more metrics to use besides grant funding and publishing?

A: Graduate programs are being reviewed at this time and metrics need to be developed to measure their success. President Kaler wants data and measureable outcomes for assessment.

Q: How is it that the University can not provide accurate data on teaching P&A, student evaluations numbers, and grant data, and that these requests require many days to complete?

A: The enterprise systems for human resources, finances, and students services all need upgrading which is one reason for delays. A larger issue is that the three systems are not compatible which is why data reports differ and require extra time to complete. The University is looking for better interoperability in the next systems, however higher education institutions are a small part of the market and companies do not want to customize systems for their uses.

Q: What are your thoughts on the health insurance increases and the talk being given regarding the state of the University not being as bad as what is being depicted by the administration?

A: No one is happy about the health insurance increases but it reflects a realistic situation. As to the recent AAUP analysis done regarding the University's financial state, it is an oversimplified analysis. The analysis suggests spending down cash reserves, but these funds affect the University's bond rating and are one-time funds that cannot be used for recurring expenses.

Q: There is a slow but steady decrease in the level of benefits for employees. Will this affect the caliber of the workforce?

A: As state revenues decrease, the University needs to increase funding from tuition, philanthropy, and reductions in the workforce that redistribute the funds to other areas of the University. There is a competitive market and the University need to make sure that comparison groups are established for each classification.

Q: What is the timeline for the new enterprise systems?

A: The administration is hoping to have an evaluation by December for an ideal system. It will then need to determine the cost for an ideal system and what is affordable. An RFP is planned for spring with implementation is 2012 for at least one system.

Q: With changes to the size and scope of the University's mission and the pressure to do more with less, how does the University get buy-in from employees for these changes?

A: This administration has only been in existence for 99 days so he would urge patience but cuts will be made. There was pushback five years ago, especially from the faculty, when cuts started but after facing yearly messages, the groundwork for additional changes is in place.

Q: Do faculty support the professional development of P&A?

A: Faculty do not have a say in the professional development of P&A, and he does not care if faculty are disappointed when P&A careers advance. He would like to see more support from Human Resources.

Q: The University has five campuses with little in common. From the governance perspective, what is the role of the coordinate campuses?

A: From the faculty perspective, there is a blind spot as the Duluth and Crookston faculty are unionized and do not participate in governance. The role of coordinate campuses deserves careful thought and each campus fills a niche role. A popular thought in the state is to close a campus to save funding, which does not provide much in savings. The most important thing is to make sure that the voice of each campus is heard.

Q: Are benefits rates and the comparison to peers discussed?

A: Salary and benefits are usually discussed separately instead of discussing the total compensation package. Among the Big Ten, faculty salaries are low; however health and retirement benefits are the best. The Regents have asked to consider these two items together and he would urge people to pay attention to the Regents docket materials.

Q: Why are you so cool?

A: With 19, 17, and 13 year old children, he loses their respect if he is not cool.

4. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ADVOCACY WORK GROUP Request for Volunteer

Starting this fall, Government and Community Relations is convening an advocacy work group to advance the University's legislative advocacy efforts. With a new legislature and an ever changing congressional delegation, legislative advocacy is all the more important. Because of your role in your college or department, I hope you would have the time to join us and make this group a success.

Historically, our office has brought together staff from throughout the U of M system to serve on the grassroots committee. That committee has now been replaced by the advocacy work group, which will consist of representatives from collegiate units and administrative departments, and delegates from the Crookston, Duluth, Morris, and Rochester campuses. The group will meet four or five times per year.

We hope the advocacy work group will strengthen your connection to our office and help you represent your college or department as part of the University's advocacy efforts.

Last legislative session, the U was successful in recruiting and engaging advocates from around the state, both internal and external to the U. They helped us influence the legislative process and engage with elected officials. With the advocacy work group, we hope to build on that success.

DISCUSSION:

Steven Pearthree stated that nominations for this position would be accepted until 9 am on Monday, October 10.

5. UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY FUND DRIVE
Sue Bartolutti

Sue Bartolutti said that she was serving as this year's P&A ambassador to the Community Fund Drive (CFD) after serving for a volunteer for several years. Last year the CFD raised \$1.2 million, of which 38 percent was contributed by P&A employees. 31 percent of the participants were also P&A employees. The CFD runs throughout the month of October. Employees can pledge to 7 federations and 400 agencies that are already created or any other 501c(3) charity. A contribution can be a one-time deduction or spread throughout the year. Interested employees can pledge at cfd.umn.edu.

6. P&A SENATE OLD BUSINESS

NONE

7. P&A SENATE NEW BUSINESS

Ann Hagen, P&A Senate Vice Chair, said that three years ago an advocacy plan was established to raise the profile of P&A employees. She reviewed the aspects of this plan and then asked if the plan should be updated or can continue to be used.

Senators thought that the plan was still relevant but asked that they be provided an opportunity to review it in detail.

Ann Hagen said that it would be posted to the P&A Senate website for senators to review.

8. P&A SENATE ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 am.

Rebecca Hippert
Abstractor