JOINT FACULTY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (FCC), P&A CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (PACC), CIVIL SERVICE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (CSCC)

October 19, 2015
Minutes of Meeting

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents]

[In these minutes: Discussion of the Job Family Study]


GUESTS: Kathy Brown, vice president, Office of Human Resources; Patti Dion, director, Employee Relations & Staff Compensation, Office of Human Resources

OTHERS ATTENDING: Vickie Courtney, Renee Dempsey, Becky Hippert, Patricia Strub (University Senate Office staff)

Professor Colin Campbell opened the meeting, welcomed members from the FCC, PACC, and the CSCC and thanked everyone for their attendance.

The purpose of the joint meeting with members from the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC), P&A Consultative Committee (PACC), Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC), Kathy Brown, vice president, Office of Human Resources, and Patti Dion, director, Employee Relations and Staff Compensation, Office of Human Resources, was to review the process, results, and implementation of the Job Family Study. Members also wanted to discuss how the Job Family Study affected employee morale. Questions from each consultative committee were submitted to Brown prior to the meeting and she said she was prepared to answer each one.

Brown thanked the members for coming together as a collective group. She began by noting that the Job Family Study project started three years prior. The University contracted with Sibson Consulting to expedite the Job Family Study process. Brown said that OHR has been consistent with following the consultant’s advice and the goal throughout the entire process has been to implement the study in a respectful and consistent manner. She emphasized that while there was no perfect way to implement this study, the goal was to be as transparent as possible throughout the whole process.

Campbell opened the floor for questions from those present.

Professor Dan Feeney asked about the changes the study inflicted on employees, particularly, people who had been groomed to perform certain tasks at certain levels and then found themselves in a different job classification. Feeney cited the Medical School as an example of such a situation. He said he is concerned about employees who are central to the heart of the
operations being reclassified and/or demoted as well as employees finding out about their classification change through an email. Supervisors did not have an opportunity to talk to their employees and prepare them for the results. Feeney said that with the difficulties in recruiting employees, quality employees should be valued. Brown responded that one of the key roles of OHR is to help recruit and retain quality employees. To her knowledge, no one has left their job because of the study. The study was intended to be cost neutral. It was not intended as a way to save money on the backs of employees. While the final run of numbers has not yet been completed, she said that just as many people went up in salary as went down.

Regarding the Medical School and the group of people unhappy with their reclassification, Brown said that it is the nature of an employee’s work that dictated what classification they fell into. People were classified based on the work they described in their self-submitted job descriptions to OHR. OHR did not rewrite job descriptions or change people’s work, but instead they classified people based on the work that had been described to OHR. OHR looked at the body of work performed, the complexity, independence of judgment required, scope, as well as any supervisory responsibilities, and then put that information into the job class structure to assign the proper classification.

OHR made every effort to send information regarding classification changes to supervisors in advance of results being given to employees; OHR was not involved with whether or not supervisors talked to employees. A timeline was sent out to everyone so supervisors knew when their employees would be receiving their classification notice. When employees were notified of their job classification, they were informed that they could appeal the decision. Brown said the appeal process has been robust and OHR used the appeal to solicit additional information to determine whether the employee had been appropriately classified. During the appeal process, the appeal panel asked for additional information from the employee and the supervisor. OHR staff talked to individuals and gathered more information about the work being done. The appeal process, guided by a cohort group, then made recommendations on whether or not to modify a classification. Brown said that classification changes were not considered demotions or promotions by OHR. The process started because the job classification system had become very inconsistent.

Ms. Kathryn Dowd asked Brown if the appeals committee reviewed the reclassification process, or if the appeal went back to the consultants who set the process up in the beginning. Brown said that the consultants did not make appeal decisions, but rather the appeals were handled internally by people who were familiar with the nature of the work, which qualified them to make decisions about correct job classifications.

Dowd asked about civil service (CS) exempt and nonexempt categories. She said that the P&A Senate understood that the purpose of the study was to isolate the CS exempt and nonexempt work so that the CS V-class could be eliminated. She noted a large movement in the IT Job Family Study where many employees were moved out of CS V-class and into P&A positions. Brown responded that the federal Fair Labor Standards Act defines exempt work as professional, requiring the use of independent discretion, salaried, and not eligible for overtime pay. In comparison, non-exempt work is described as more routine in nature with less independent judgment required, and eligible for overtime pay after 40 hours per week.
The study wanted to place jobs in their correct classifications, which could be CS exempt/non-
exempt or P&A. Brown noted that there is not a distinct line between P&A exempt and CS
exempt. The CS job classification started post-WWII and the P&A job classification started in
late 1970s. P&A was supposed to be more faculty-like work, but expanded into administrative
work; the blurring of these lines occurred unintentionally over time. Brown said that some
managers prefer their employees to be within the P&A classification because they believe they
have more flexibility in how to manage these employees while others prefer their employees to
be classified as CS. Brown said that one classification was not easier to work in over another;
there are appropriate terms and conditions of employment to be managed regardless of an
employee’s job classification.

Professor Joe Konstan asked Brown and Dion their thoughts regarding the opinions of some
employees that the reclassification process was set up so that chances of obtaining a higher
classification was dependent on reporting to someone higher up in the University. Konstan said
that some employees felt that no matter how big a department was a higher classification was
impossible to achieve. He asked if that was an accurate observation and, if so, would reporting
to a more centralized unit be associated with a higher classification? Brown responded to
Konstan by saying his question highlights why the job classification work was so
important. Before the study, there were so many generic job titles in existence with no
limitations on their use. This caused salary ranges and responsibilities to vary greatly making it
difficult to understand if changing positions within the University was a lateral move, a
promotion, or a demotion. Brown gave the example of the title “coordinator,” which had a
salary range from $25k to $250k. By reclassifying positions and eliminating certain titles,
employees will have a sense of what a title means and what a job move would mean for
them. Dion added that Konstan’s question illustrates that a number of colleges and departments
had their own rules regarding job titles, and that the University had a classification system that
was not being implemented consistently across the whole system.

Moving forward, Brown noted that when jobs are posted, OHR would be reviewing the postings
to ensure the classification is consistent with the job responsibilities. She acknowledged that this
new review process is taking more time and causing delays in getting positions posted. OHR is
working on speeding up the process. Brown added that colleges and administrative units have
different levels of human resources (HR) support, which is also having an impact on the
timeliness of the posting process. Colleges with experienced HR support staff tended to feel
better about the reclassification process and more secure in their potential transition. The
colleges with less support, experienced more challenges.

Dowd asked if collegiate HR staff is connected to central OHR. Dowd said that issues occurred
due to poor communication; people were not receiving good information from their HR
contacts. It should be the responsibility of central OHR to support the departmental HR
staff. Dowd also suggested providing education on how to properly fill out a job posting in order
to speed up the job posting process. Dowd wanted to know what central OHR’s responsibility is
in educating HR staff and messaging the process out to these employees. In response, Brown
explained that each college and administrative unit has a HR lead. These leads report to Brown
and they meet monthly. The study had been discussed throughout the whole process in these
monthly meetings where they talked regularly about what was happening in each college and unit. Brown noted that the previous title of “HR Pro” had been eliminated because this title implied a responsibility for human resource matters when many of these individuals only had an interest, and not a responsibility for HR. Brown said that HR leads are responsible for managing the communication within their collegiate or administrative units. OHR held meetings and open sessions before each job family reclassification took place to explain the importance of filling out position descriptions, etc. Brown said that it is important to note that, going forward, the position descriptions will help with the job reclassification process because as work and responsibilities change, so will the classification. Also, on a different note, she added that the percent of time spent on supervisory duties was not used to determine who was classified as a supervisor, but rather the title corresponded with the number of people an individual oversaw.

Ms. Terri Wallace said many employees believe the article in the Wall Street Journal about the number of University administrators spurred the study. Wallace added that she also heard that the administrative job family was saved until last because this group was going to be hit the hardest and that the reclassifications were being done to please the legislature and other critics. Wallace said that of the 417 people who were moved from P&A to CS, 126 (30%) were in the administrative job family, and of the 140 who moved from CS to labor-represented, 104 (70%) were in the administrative job family. Wallace reported that many people in the administrative job family are feeling demoralized. She said people are taking being moved into a lower classification personally, and it is negatively impacting employee morale. Brown said she understood and explained that the administrative job family was saved for last because it was the largest family with the most complexity. Brown said that “assistant,” “associate,” and “coordinator” were all titles in the administrative job family and they were all very broad titles with no real rules or regulations regarding who could hold these titles, and provided no real work scope. OHR knew a lot of people in those classes would end up being reclassified. As mentioned previously, Brown said that OHR saw a range of pay from $25k to $250k for the title of “coordinator,” which meant that the scope of the work being performed had to be quite different. The administrative job family also came last so OHR would know as much as possible about the process to ensure it went smoothly. Brown said that OHR was given no instructions to reduce the number of administrators. OHR encountered a number of coordinators in the administrative job family who were doing mission or mission support work. The University spends money in three ways; mission, mission support, and leadership and administrative work. If someone is performing mission support work, they should get credit for that work. Some people were reclassified because their work was geared more towards student support, finance, etc., not because OHR had a goal of cutting administrators.

Brown said another issue OHR uncovered in this process was that when supervisors hired a preferred qualified candidate, the candidate might ask for a specific salary. This result could be that the new employee would be put in a job classification that corresponded with the salary level they desired rather than the position as posted. The ambiguity in the classification system allowed for the salary disparity within the same classification. Previously, a salary equity study was not possible because the work assigned to titles was not the same. Now, because of the Job Family Study, equity studies can be conducted on a rotation of every three to four years. The work performed and the salaries paid will be able to be reviewed because job titles will be
comparable. The University can then ensure that people are within the correct salary range for
the work that they do and that employees are being paid equitably.

Mr. Gordon Fisher asked Brown to clarify if the same people who were conducting the initial
review were also conducting the appeals. Brown’s response was that the group was selected
specifically from the respective job family. Some people, due to their managerial positions, may
have served on a previous job family panel, and other individuals were new to the appeal process
and their seat was based on their role within the job family in question.

Fisher then asked about future HR plans to avoid miscommunication on key HR issues affecting
employees. He wanted to ensure both communication and education were happening as it
should. Fisher was also interested in how the stated goals of the project were being
measured. Brown responded that OHR is in the process of trying to sort out what would be
appropriate oversight/measure of the system going forward. She said that OHR needs to hire
in the compensation and classification area, and it needs to reach out to deans regarding this
issue. Managing the system moving forward will include periodic reviews of job families. Also,
when a job is posted, it will be reviewed by OHR centrally to ensure it is put in the proper job
classification and posted at the correct level. OHR wants to ensure consistency so that people
are classified correctly. The salary ranges within each classification are intended to be broad
enough to allow some flexibility for the appointing authority. OHR wants to put systems and
processes into place so that functional, easy to use, transparent, and understandable policies can
be created.

Ms. Jean Wang said that when looking at job descriptions, Brown had indicated that who an
employee reported to was not a factor in classification. Wang asked for clarification as to why
whom an employee reported to was not a factor. Brown reiterated that classification is based on
the work being done. This means that who an employee reports to is not a factor in the actual
work performed. The argument that work done for a senior administrator is more important than
work being done elsewhere did not address whether an employee is asked to exercise more
individual judgment, which was a factor to consider for a higher classification. The work an
employee performs is independent of who they report to. Brown stressed that it is the nature of
the work the supervisor requires that is considered when classifying jobs.

Wang said she understood that labor-represented employees were not involved in the Job Family
Study, and asked why these positions were not also reviewed, especially because some CS and
P&A were moved into labor-represented positions. Brown responded that labor-represented
employees are governed by collective bargaining agreements and their classification is set in
their labor agreements. At any time a labor-represented employee can have a review and be
reclassified into CS or P&A if their job duties or work warrant the reclassification. Because
collective bargaining agreements need to be negotiated, OHR did not review employees in labor-
represented groups because they were not renegotiating the contracts. If employees classified as
CS or P&A were performing work considered within the labor classification, they were
reclassified. Brown noted that classifications are not set in stone and if an employee’s work
changes, they can be reclassified.
Dion recalled a similar job family study that was done about 10 years ago in the clerical unit, which resulted in a significant reduction in job titles from 30 to 10. Dion said that positions were created every time there was an opening, which meant an ongoing review of individual positions. OHR is performing a mini-study in the three clerical units and within the Teamsters to ensure those jobs are classified appropriately.

Mr. John Paton commented that because there were no labor-represented individuals on the panels, there was no one to recommend or defend whether someone should be in the labor-represented class or not. Brown said that the unions did not approach OHR to ask that positions be added or removed from labor-represented classifications. The unions have been silent. She noted that Dion has been doing labor contract work for a long time. Dion has been a part of the clerical contract restructuring and she was able to add her labor expertise to the panels, which made up for labor’s absence.

Professor Lyn Bearinger said she would like written responses to the questions that had been submitted ahead of time. Brown said she felt that she covered most of the questions through her comments during the meeting. Campbell asked Senate staff to solicit unanswered questions from members. Brown agreed to meet with the committee again to finish answering any remaining questions if that would be helpful to members.

Bearinger said that her difficulty with the process was that the consultative committees had not been consulted. She also felt it was important that the classifications be compared to each other in consideration of gender equity. Brown thanked Bearinger for the suggestion and said once the Job Family Study is completed there will be a way to perform equity studies in a thoughtful and systematic way. Brown also said that she spoke to many groups when the Job Family Study was starting as well as throughout the process.

Wallace asked if the administrative job family appeal decisions would be completed by the end of the month, and Brown said yes.

Chair Campbell adjourned the meeting.

Avonna Starck
University Senate Office