Joint Meeting of the Consultative Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs with Vice President Kathy Brown
Minutes of the Meeting
December 1, 2015

[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 notes present 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)

Present:
Office of Human Resources: Vice President Kathy Brown, Patti Dion, Patty Franklin
Faculty Consultative Committee: Professors Colin Campbell, Jigna Desai
P&A Consultative Committee: Etty DeVeaux, Susanne Vandergon
Senate Staff: Vickie Courtney, Becky Hippert, Avonna Starck, Patricia Straub

Absent:
Civil Service Consultative Committee: Duane Orlovski

The purpose of the joint meeting of the consultative committee chairs and vice chairs with Vice President Kathy Brown, Office of Human Resources, and Patti Dion, director, Employee Relations and Compensation, Office of Human Resources, was to follow up on the discussion regarding the Job Family Study held on October 19, 2015.

Vice President Kathy Brown began by noting what changed since the meeting on October 19. All job families have been completed. The only exception is the development job family, which was put on hold in agreement with the University of Minnesota Foundation due to the merger that recently took place. HR expects to start this job family in late spring/early summer.

Brown said she met with the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP) on November 23 about the Job Family Study and the Enterprise System Upgrade Project (ESUP). She noted that the Job Family Study is now in a phase of sustainability and is allowing HR to review processes impacting work in the most effective and efficient way, including all jobs that are being posted to make sure that they are correctly categorized.

The next step for the Job Family Study is regular review of the job family classifications to make sure that there is development of the families and that descriptions are enhanced with competencies. The regular review cycle has not yet been determined. Studies will also be done within the families to ensure that there is equitable treatment among employees, which could not be done in the previous system. HR will continue to tweak and improve the system to make sure that it works well, Brown said.

Brown announced that a new Compensation and Classification Director would be starting after January 1. Additionally, staff in this area will be built back up to replace employees who have recently left.
Brown reported that HR hosted four guests from the Ohio State University HR office recently who met with members of her office as they are just starting their reclassification project. She said that she is very happy to be at the end instead of just starting this project.

Brown then addressed the questions that were submitted to her prior to the meeting.

**Question 1:**
The reclassification had some striking and, I think, unintended consequences, such as removing entirely the top level of staff supervisory positions from the Morris campus and, in turn, making it more difficult for us to recruit and retain quality staff. Given the feedback received last year on such issues (from the Morris campus, I know, and elsewhere, I assume), what, if any, changes on this particular aspect have been implemented or are planned?

Response:
Brown said that a misconception is that the top level supervisors were removed during this project. Instead, the work was looked at and employees were put into appropriate job classifications. The project did not change the work being done by employees. She spent time discussing this issue with the Morris Chancellor and suggested that they make use of working titles to provide more description for positions, such as Director of Admissions.

**Question 2:**
Staff who saved the institution money by taking on more responsibilities rather than rehiring a position once vacated were ultimately penalized by the reclassification; their jobs were identified as too broad to belong to some of the higher classifications. Are there any plans to revisit any of the classification definitions or to adapt them at all to particular circumstances?

Response:
Patti Dion responded that a number of factors were considered when mapping positions into new classifications. Scope of the work/breadth was only one of them, and did not have a negative impact. Other factors included decision-making ability and the kinds of decisions being made, problem solving, and independence of action. When all of these factors were reviewed, it determined where each position would fit in the structure.

Desai then asked if the number of people being supervised was a deciding factor since some employees might have a wide range for decision-making but only supervise a few people.

Dion responded that this is why the classification system includes an individual contributor and manager/supervisor track. The manager/supervisor track requires three direct reports and is governed by the state’s Public Employment Labor Relations statute.

Desai then asked if the individual contributor track has a lower salary.

Brown said no, both tracks are at a parallel level and have the same salary range.

**Question 3:**
To what extent can we now access all of the applicants for a specific job, whether or not those applicants appear to meet the criteria defined by the classification now given to that job?

Response:
Brown noted that this question does not relate to the Job Family Study but is a question regarding the application system, which should allow an employer to look at all the candidates who apply for a posted position.

Question 4:
I may be able to find this information elsewhere, but is there any clear sense of just how much money was saved by this process, either system-wide or, preferably, campus by campus? What was the total cost of the reclassification effort?

Response:
Brown said that this project was not done as a way to save costs by classifying employees lower or reducing salaries. While final numbers are not available, it was more common to increase salaries to meet the new ranges than for salaries to be decreased. Also, the message was sent this week that existing employees will not have their salaries cut in three years to be inside the top range.

Professor Campbell said that the previous decision to cut salaries in three years seemed unfair. Therefore he appreciated the email that was sent this week updating this practice for current employees.

Brown said that she hopes this email was seen as an employee-friendly action.

Question 5:
Please summarize the Job Family Study outcomes and process including: How many personnel positions reviewed? How many reclassified? How many reclassified upwards (with a raise included)? How many reclassified downwards (where current pay frozen because now at/above top of range)? How many appeals submitted? How many granted?

Response:
Brown responded that the process used was the same from the start to the finish. The numbers show that 9,152 positions were processed during the study. Of this, 10 percent appealed, and of that 10 percent, 40 percent of the appeals were granted. As for movement, the majority of employees remained in their current employee group.

The preliminary numbers show that:

- Approximately 3,100 civil service stayed civil service
- Approximately 3,800 P&A stayed P&A
- Approximately 1,100 civil service were moved to P&A
- Approximately 400 P&A were moved to civil service
- Approximately 180 civil service/P&A were moved to a labor-represented classification
The key factor when making these changes was how the work was classified according to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Minnesota Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA) (exempt vs. non-exempt). There was no intent to move employees up or down, or to have employee groups increase or decrease in size.

**Question 6:**
On net, what is the recurring difference in U of M payroll expected as a result of reclassifications (any increase or decrease)?

Response:
Brown said that more positions increased in pay than decreased, and as noted this week, no current employee’s pay will decrease.

Desai asked where increases occurred.

Dion said that the largest number of positions that were below the salary ranges were in the research and education job families.

**Question 7:**
Do we know how many employees left the U of M as a result of reclassifications? If so, how many?

Response:
Brown said that she does not know of anyone who left due to a job reclassification, and again this was not the intent of the project.

**Question 8:**
Will HR be shrinking as a result of this project being complete? If not, were there other priorities that were delayed and now will be worked on with greater effort?

Response:
Brown said that HR did not increase staff to complete this work, and actually lost staff during the course of the project so employees are being added to have a sustainable level going forward. Sibson Consulting had a $640,000 contract to complete work for the University but ended up providing more work than what was in the contract.

**Question 9:**
Looking back, what are you proudest of in this process? What would you change with benefit of hindsight?

Response:
Brown and Dion both said that their proudest part of the process is that it is finished.

Dion also said that she is gratified that the University will now be able to identify work through titles. For employees, this process leveled the employment structure and shows opportunities for growth. Was the process 100 percent perfect? The answer is no. Were some issues addressed
through appeals? Yes. Will other issues be found now or when positions are posted? Yes. HR did its best through the process and has provided clear guidelines going forward for employees.

Brown said that 9,000 employees now have job descriptions, which can facilitate a conversation with their supervisor about other work that they can do at their level. It allows employees to build competencies and supervisors to show what is needed to move to a higher position. The individual contributor track also allows employees to have some supervisory work within their position.

**Question 10:**
For those employees who believe that they have been demoted, what professional development opportunities can be provided to them?

**Response:**
Brown said that she does not believe that anyone was demoted. Every employee is valuable and contributes to the work at the University. This project was just a re-description of the work done by employees. It did not change anyone’s work or lower their value. HR will be working through the Office of Leadership and Talent Development on supervisor and leadership role training and will continue to develop more broad-based training as well.

**Question 11:**
What systems or tools did the job study process employ to understand that the nuances in University work (versus corporate work) are truly understood and appropriately classified? Small departments where employees do both a broad range and level of work seem disproportionately moved to lower classifications in the job study. More singularly focused portfolios in larger units seems to have fared better, and particularly so in the administrative job family study. What evidence is there to support that the new job classifications accurately capture the work being done at the University and that individuals are, in fact, appropriately classified based on the work they perform? Since so many employees are expressing a lack of confidence in the process and outcome, how are you communicating your confidence in the process and outcome to all employees?

**Response:**
Brown said that Sibson Consulting has worked extensively in higher education, and is focused and knowledgeable, so does not believe that they used a corporate model to describe all University positions. However, some work, such as accounting, is not unique to higher education. HR communicated to employees throughout the process, she added. She said she knows that the outcome for some employees was not what they wanted, but it only represents a slice in time when the classification was submitted. As work may change, employees are eligible to ask for a reclassification six months after a decision. If an employee’s work has changed, then they may be re-classed. This process will be more individualized going forward, she concluded.

**Question 12:**
Communication to employees has been inconsistent throughout the job family process. A primary concern is that reasons for denial of appeals are not communicated in the decision letters
to employees. Neither are material decisions, or the rationale for them, for example: creating the new CS exempt classifications; data on the number of appeals received/denied/successful; who participates in the appeals process/decisions. When will this information be available to the community?

Response:
Brown said that it was not possible to communicate the rationale for classification decisions, as there were only eight employees on this project for 9,000 positions. Employees are encouraged to talk with their supervisors and HR leads to get information, although she realizes that some supervisors and HR leads are better communicators than others.

Campbell said that he can understand the rationale but noted it does not feel right that no one had the time to explain why a position was classified in a certain way. He knows that many employees are angry about the lack of an explanation and he does not feel that he could provide justification for this one decision.

Brown responded that the rationale is simply practical. HR tried making the letters more personal and then less personal, and both were seen as equally insulting to employees. HR tried to make the determination in a respectful way and going forward will try to smooth out hurt feelings.

Etty DeVeaux said that in her opinion, training needs to be done with the local HR Leads to improve communication with employees.

Brown said that HR meets with the HR Leads on a monthly basis and has talked about this project with them for the last 2.5 years. She acknowledged that some HR Leads are more comfortable or knowledgeable on this topic. Brown assured the group that professional development would be done with the HR Leads to help improve the system.

DeVeaux asked if any assessment was done at the local level for the HR Leads.

Brown said that every HR Lead has a dotted reporting line to her, and that she and Patti Dion are involved in their hiring but not in their evaluations. However, she said, this provides an opportunity to work with this group and provide them with more tools to help them to their jobs better.

Susanne Vandergon asked if HR decided not to personalize both the initial and appeal letters.

Brown said yes.

**Question 13:**
Concerns related to benefits impact come both from CS moving to P&A and vice versa. These factors and impacts are different depending on how long an employee has been at the University, and in a given class. How was length of time in a classification and/or number of years left until retirement factored in job classification decisions? Is there a matrix that clearly lays out benefits loss/gain/neutral?
Response:
Brown said that length in a position was not a factor unless an employee was close to retirement in which case the position might have been left the same but as no new entry.

**Question 14:**
For employees that were moved to CS due to a change in non-exemption status, what consideration was given to either grandfathering in their vacation and other benefits or otherwise compensating them for what is perceived as a loss in total rewards?

Response:
Dion said that if a position was reclassified from P&A to non-exempt civil service, there was not the option to keep them in the P&A classification due to federal regulations. The HR website has a benefits matrix for each group, but determining what is a gain or loss is a personal decision depending on how an employee is classified and what benefits they value.

Brown added that employees were allowed to elect which retirement plan they preferred. For example, she said, after eight years in civil service it might be best to stay with in the Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS). She noted that individual counseling was offered to employees to help them understand the benefits for their classification.

Vandergon reported that she heard from P&A who were reclassified to civil service or labor-represented that they had no sick time. Did HR consider a calculation based on years of service so that no P&A employee lost this benefit?

Dion said that a calculation for changing benefits between employee groups was not developed. For employees in difficult situations, such as pregnant women, they were told to work with their HR Leads to see what could be done.

**Question 15:**
Employees are reporting a lack of resources, information, and support related to the Job Study: "management" in the units do not have or share sufficient information and point the finger up to central HR; central HR refers employees back to their local HR pro. Where can employees go for definitive responses to their queries?

Response:
Brown said that the decisions were made at the central level and were communicated directly to employees, so employees should work with central HR on their queries. She apologized for employees being bounced between the two levels.

**Question 16:**
What attention has been paid to gender equity in the job study? For instance, have classifications with disproportionately female employees been scaled to low pay range positions, or moved from higher to lower classifications? When will we see these data?

Response:
Brown said that gender and any other protected category was not a basis for the decisions that were made; only the work was considered. The people making the decisions only knew an employee by the name on the form, which is not a clear indication of gender.

Vandergon asked if gender in the classifications would be looked at now that the project is completed.

Brown said that perhaps it would, but one reason that gender may be a factor is because a job family could be mostly one gender.

Desai said that some classes have been feminized over time and therefore might be valued less.

Dion said that this could also have been true before the project. The question now is did the study result in something different.

Campbell said that gender is still important to review in retrospect as there is always the law of unintended consequences and this would be an opportunity for the University to address historical wrongs.

Brown said that HR now has a greater ability to monitor protected class issues.

**Question 17:**
What will be done by HR to ensure that the stated goals of the JFS are tracked and accomplished? Specifically, in relation to the stated goal: Establish more clearly defined career paths and more transparent pay structures across the University system. Are the career paths in each ladder being utilized by employees? How will this be measured or tracked?

**Response:**
Brown said that HR did not have anything specific in mind and appreciates this suggestion. HR will need to develop metrics to show that the career paths are working.

Desai said that she heard from an employee that HR told them that a retention offer or reapplying for their job at a higher level were the only options for advancement. However, this project should make a market study of positions a possibility as well. Transparency on the career paths and pay structures will be a high priority going forward.

Dion responded that employees need to remember that career paths are not just within their current unit but need to be considered across the University.

Desai countered that this information should be conveyed to local HR Leads so they can address it with employees.

Brown said that the project shed light on issues that need attention, such as more training for HR Leads on policy and processes. HR will need to be more transparent in more areas, she said.

**Question 18:**
In relation to the stated goal: Align our classification specifications with external market trends and ensure that our job classifications match the work being done. In the spirit of transparency will this market data be shared with all employees? Would you be willing to share where the information was drawn from by job family (i.e. comparable universities, private sector, public sector jobs, small colleges)?

Response: Brown said that a regular market analysis that is transparent is now possible.

**Question 19:**
Another goal: Provide a foundation for strategic workforce planning and development to match institutional needs and priorities. At what level is this happening Institutional/Collegiate/Department/Team)? How is the process going to work in relation to the JFS?

Response: Brown provided an example of one administrator who saw the results in her unit in which all employees were classified at the same level, which is not the best outcome for a unit as it does not allow for progress and advancement. The administrator decided to reorganize staff and the work to create levels in her unit. However, it is hard to reorganize work if a supervisor does not know what each employee is doing, Brown noted.

After answering all the submitted questions, Brown asked if there were any additional questions or comments.

Campbell said that he has been made aware of the depth of anger by employees who were reclassified. He hopes that something can be done to address these feelings given some employees may leave if they have the option because they are appreciated any longer by the University.

Dion agreed that employees took this process very personal and that they believe that what they are being called does not accurately reflect their value, when in fact, they are doing the same work with the same people, after the process is complete.

DeVeaux said that the project was and continues to be a major morale downer and could have a profound impact. Not reducing salaries was one way to promote healing but more work is needed. She said that employee reactions are not logical, but psychological.

Brown said that HR needed to see this process through to the end. She asked for suggestions to help employees move forward.

DeVeaux said that there is no perfect solution, however, it is important that local HR Leads are trained and prepared.
Campbell said that he agreed that this process needed to be finished. It was a tremendous gesture to not cut salaries, he added. However, instead of an ad hoc approach to benefits, HR should consider giving back something that was taken from all employees as another remedy.

Vandergon said that she agreed and that all P&A employees moved to civil service or labor-represented should be provided with a sick leave balance.

Desai added that HR needs to continue to help the growth and development of all employees so that they can see how their career aspirations can be achieved at the University. This is an issue that central HR needs to address as the local levels are inconsistent and have too much turnover.

Vandergon asked Brown if she would be open to meeting with the P&A Senate at a spring semester meeting as the group expressed a high level of anger, stress, and unrest at their November meeting.

Brown said that she would be willing to meet with the P&A Senate. She noted that HR should be contacted directly with any individual issues.

Hearing no further questions, the meeting was adjourned.

Becky Hippert
University Senate Office