The University Senate
FACULTY · STUDENT · P&A · CIVIL SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

P&A Consultative Committee (PACC)
November 18, 2021
Minutes of the 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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration, or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Call to Order and Welcome; Visit with President Joan Gabel; Civil Service Consultative Committee Report; Chair and Chair-elect Reports; P&A Subcommittee Reports; Discussion: P&A Senate Recap and MPACT 2025 Jamboard]

PRESENT: Scott Creer, (chair), Adolfo Carrillo Cabello (chair-elect) Leigh Allen, Chelsie Bohlman, Marti Fasteland, Tracey Hammell, Erin Heath, Monica Kocon, Maureen Long, Anna Milone, Nancy Sims

GUESTS: Joan Gabel, president, University of Minnesota, Tony Fussy, chair-elect, Civil Service Senate/Civil Service Consultative Committee, Kate Stuckert, senior assistant to the president, Office of the President

OTHERS: Will Craig, representative, University of Minnesota Retirees Association (UMRA)

1. Call to Order and Welcome
Chair Scott Creer welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

2. Visit with President Joan Gabel
Creer thanked President Joan Gabel for attending the meeting, and asked for a round of introductions. PACC members introduced themselves and explained how their work impacts the MPACT 2025 Systemwide Strategic Plan (MPACT 2025). Gabel was very appreciative and enthusiastic to hear PACC members take time to connect their work with the five commitments in MPACT 2025. Questions from PACC members were submitted to Gabel for review prior to the meeting.

Leigh Allen asked the president to comment on the following observation and question: Frequently, staff feel that unit-level leadership decision making doesn't align with the guidance and recommendations from the Office of the President. How is guidance communicated from your office to senior leaders?

Gabel said she was not surprised by the question, and shared the following comments:

- Early in the pandemic, nearly daily emails were sent from the Office of the President to everyone on campus. They are now sent roughly one to two times per month touching on overarching issues.
- On a regular basis, Ken Horstman, senior vice president, Office of Human Resources (OHR), will communicate with HR leads and Executive Vice President and Provost Rachel Croson will communicate with University deans. The hope is, depending on the nature of what is being communicated, that this information will filter to the rest of the institution through these two sets of leaders.
- Senior administration is working on ways to communicate better across the very large, very decentralized culture that is the University of Minnesota.
- Senior administration has specific expectations about how its guidance/recommendations are implemented across the system. However, Gabel said, it is clear that implementation varies among units and departments. This could be due to the multiple channels through which the guidance gets delivered as well as varying interpretations of the guidance.
- By providing information to governance groups, deans, HR leads, and the senior leadership team, the intention is for communications to be uniformly distributed across the institution.
- Senior leadership recognizes that the feedback loop process needs improvement to ensure that it receives comments about issues or problems *before* communication starts breaking down.

Allen next asked how the president monitors compliance with the guidance that is provided to senior leaders. Gabel said audits, while they take a long time to implement, are helpful in terms of setting expectations and making commitments. She added that she looks forward to a time when the University can respond to events in a *proactive* rather than *reactive* manner, as it has been forced (by the pandemic) to do for the past 20 months.

Allen then asked what methods the president relies on to ascertain the realities of operations at the University compared to information provided to her by senior leaders. Gabel said she hears from many different sources, and not all the reporting is accurate, so it's imperative to carefully filter and respond to what comes into her office.

Tracey Hammell said while P&A staff value that the University continually looks at all aspects of creating a more equitable and inclusive environment, it is noticeable that regents and University administrators use different language and convey different attitudes when discussing faculty and staff. She asked President Gabel for her thoughts on what might be influencing the distinction. Gabel said she is careful and intentional about her word choices and continues to try to improve in that area. She added that some people are both uninformed, and, to some degree, not aware of how closely and carefully people are listening to what they say. She opined that some people, whose words may seem offensive, may not be in positions to receive feedback about how they can speak and behave less offensively. The vocabulary around our identities in general is evolving, Gabel added, and some people are more nimble than others in evolving the way they speak. She added that if there is a message that PACC would like carried forward, her office would be happy to assist in supporting such a message and recommends presenting it thoughtfully so that PACC's hoped-for outcome can be achieved.

Nancy Sims asked Gabel to talk about the metrics that she and her administration use to assess staff morale and performance. Gabel said that the annual Employee Engagement Survey is the

main tool used to gather quantitative data, and in a "normal" year, it serves pretty well. She added that qualitative evaluations are more difficult to assess. Every email that goes to the Office of the President receives an answer, Gabel said, and she relies on feedback from governance members and the University community at large so as not to make assumptions about how people are feeling.

Sims next said that she and colleagues have discussed the way the Employee Engagement Survey is structured, and that it feels as though it measures how employees are beneficial to the employer, which doesn't necessarily feel like a measurement of employee morale. Gabel said she would think more on that observation and discuss it with the HR team that runs the survey. She acknowledged that feeling engaged as an employee doesn't automatically equate to being happy or fulfilled.

In response to questions about staff compensation at the University, Gabel noted the following:

- On "average" the University pays close to market; some people and job categories are right on target, some are above, and some are below market value.
- Because the institution is so large and complicated, aggregated data must be looked at and evaluated, and that is most likely not very satisfying to individual employees.
- The University is using the PEAK Initiative to understand how to better align employee workloads to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and employee satisfaction.
- The PEAK Initiative has never been about layoffs, but rather leveraging attrition, having informed, data-driven analysis of employee workloads, and how to more appropriately distribute work to appropriate staff.

Gabel acknowledged that it's very difficult to improve morale when employees feel they are being underpaid relative to others in the same position. She said that the administration is actively working on finding resources and making qualitative adjustments that she hopes will better support employees and improve morale.

Creer thanked Gabel and offered assistance from PACC in conveying the administration's objectives and strategies to a broader audience if Gabel felt that would be helpful.

3. Civil Service Consultative Committee Report
A written report, provided by Tony Fussy, chair-elect, Civil Service Senate/Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC), is included in this document.

4. Chair and Chair-elect Reports
A written report, provided by Creer, is included in this document. Additional items noted by Creer at the meeting included the following:

- P&A and civil service leadership are discussing ways to address the imbalance of representation in the University Senate. Creer believes it will be a long, ongoing process which could involve the development of a special committee or task force to consider the feasibility of changing the University Senate Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules to address the senate membership numbers.
- Regarding the University's revised vaccine mandate:
    - A communication from Ken Horstman regarding the vaccine mandate will be sent November 22, 2021.
    - Deadline for compliance is December 3, 2021.

    - There are only two options - proof of vaccination or exemption (religious or medical). There is no testing component involved in this phase.
    - Student employees will also be part of this process.
    - A new policy will accompany the new requirements and will be issued as an emergency policy. Consultation with governance will take place after the policy has been issued.
- Creer noted he emailed President Gabel to ask her administration to consider an expansion of the Native American Promise Program to include staff members, and secondly, to point out some challenges that exist for staff applying for the Regents Scholarship.
- P&A leadership is asking for the analysis of the Employee Engagement Survey to be parsed by employee group so that it would have data specific to P&A staff.
- Discussions with Horstman regarding creating a working group made up of OHR representatives and P&A Senate members to develop promotion and advancement opportunities for P&A staff are taking place. Creer has tasked PACC to develop a process for appointing P&A staff members to the working group.

5. P&A Subcommittee Reports
Monthly written subcommittee reports are included in this document.

6. Discussion: P&A Senate Recap and MPACT 2025 Jamboard
Creer then moved on to evaluating the information that was provided by P&A Senate members at the November 5, 2021, meeting (via Jamboard) regarding quantitative data around how P&A staff directly impacts MPACT 2025. Communications Subcommittee Co-chairs Tracey Hammell and Chelsie Bohlman will use some of the Jamboard data to populate the "P&A Driving MPACT 2025" segment of upcoming P&A newsletters.

Creer asked PACC members to discuss data in the Jamboard that could be used for gathering qualitative data. Committee member comments included:

- The University of Minnesota Libraries can provide data about P&A staff that have authored publications broken out by calendar year.
- The Benefits and Compensation Subcommittee, at its next meeting, is going to narrow down what types of data it would like to request regarding compensation - and locate the appropriate offices/units for making the requests.
- Consider attrition compared to hiring and attrition compared to open positions with respect to how overburdened many employees at the University are. The reduced number of staff at the University along with an undiminished workload has a direct impact on staff morale and their ability to support the commitments in MPACT 2025.
- Highlight the number of P&As who are PhD advisors and serve on dissertation committees.

Committee members had a lengthy discussion regarding the pros, cons, and risks of sharing information that compares P&A staff contributions to those of faculty at the University. Creer said that the point that he is trying to promote with this data is that the University has changed and that there is now a tremendous amount of teaching, research, and service that is being done by University members who do not happen to be tenured faculty. The student experience and the services being provided are much greater than the "in-classroom" experience and are provided by many different personnel groups.

Committee members debated the value of and the difference in "comparing P&A staff to faculty" and "demonstrating P&A staff impact on the mission of the University." Allen suggested rather than making direct comparisons to faculty, frame the work that P&A do as addressing and supporting the three main components of the University's mission: teaching, research, and service. Sims suggested that there is active, political sentiment *against* universities right now and, therefore, making comparisons to faculty may not be in P&A staff's best interest. She added that MPACT 2025 is an illustration of how to demonstrate the impact of employee groups at the University without making such comparisons. Creer acknowledged Sim's opinion and said that his main objective is to make sure that the positive information about P&A staff at the University is what gets shared.

In the interest of time, Creer adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole
University Senate Office