The University Senate

FACULTY · STUDENT · P&A · CIVIL SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

2021-2022 P&A SENATE MINUTES: No. 3

February 4, 2022
9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

The third meeting of the P&A Senate for the 2021-22 academic year was convened via Zoom on Friday, February 4, 2022, at 9:30 a.m. Fifty-seven senators and 15 alternates signed in as present. Chair Scott Creer presided.

1. Call to Order and Welcome
Chair Scott Creer called the meeting to order and welcomed P&A Senate members. He briefly outlined the agenda items and reminded senate members to observe meeting decorum.

2. P&A Consultative Committee Report
Creer reported on topics that are covered more thoroughly in his written report, included in this document. Below are a few items Creer highlighted from his written report:

- Elections for the 2022-23 P&A Senate officers will take place at the April 1, 2022, P&A Senate meeting.
- The University community is concerned about returning to campus in light of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. P&A leadership has shared with administration its opinion that a service delivery expectation shift has to be recognized in order to support employees during this time.
- P&A leadership is engaging in discussions with leadership from the Faculty and Civil Service Senates regarding the University of Minnesota's Wellbeing Program.
- P&A leadership is continuing to advocate for transparency and clarity around employee performance management (employee reviews) and how the University currently uses the term "merit pool."

Hearing no questions after his report, Creer moved to the next agenda item.

3. Civil Service Senate Report
Tony Fussy, chair-elect, Civil Service Senate/Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC), spoke briefly on topics that are covered more thoroughly in his written report, included in this document.

4. Student Senate Report
Justin Goetz, vice chair, Student Senate/Student Senate Consultative Committee, noted that the areas of advocacy from the Student Senate included minimum wage for student workers, improving advising resources, and advocacy for graduate students.

5. P&A Senate Subcommittee Reports
P&A Senate subcommittee reports are linked in this document. Co-chairs of the subcommittees are:

- Professional Development & Recognition - Leigh Allen and Monica Kocon
- Outreach - Maureen Long and Anna Milone
- Chelsie Bohlman and Tracey Hammel
- Benefits & Compensation - Marti Fasteland and Nancy Sims

Gretchen Sieger referred to a previous discussion regarding creating opportunities for newer senate members to ask questions and learn from others with more governance experience. She asked if that initiative was still being considered. Maureen Long said that the details of a possible mentorship program were still being discussed by the Outreach Subcommittee.

Creer noted that he and Adolfo Carrillo Cabello would be available to discuss officer roles and responsibilities with anyone who might be considering running for officer positions in the spring elections.

6. Using Data Constructively
Moving to the next agenda item, Creer briefly outlined how requested datasets are being used by P&A leadership to tell the story of who P&A are, the important positions they fill, and how they support the mission and strategic plan of the University. Creer said that statements in support of P&A at the University will be shared with administration, including the Board of Regents, to elevate and illuminate the value of P&A staff contributions to the University.

Creer asked senate members to review the following three datasets:

- November 24, 2021 Enrollment Report - This data was requested in order to determine the percentage of course credits for fall semester 2021 that were taught by P&A staff; roughly 30% systemwide.
- Sponsored Projects Data for Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022 - This data was requested to determine the percentage of sponsored project dollars brought into the University by P&A-led teams.
- University of Minnesota Libraries Research Publication Data - Over the last five years, an average of 22% of all scholarly publications at the University had at least one P&A author.

Noting that data analysis was not his strength, Creer invited senate members - those whose positions were more closely related to data analysis - to suggest how the datasets might be verified and strengthened and if there were other conclusions that could be drawn from the provided data.

Kalli Binkowski asked if Creer was asking senate members to recruit staff members from outside the P&A Senate membership to work on these datasets and Creer clarified he would like to keep the project in-house at senator-level engagement. He added that senate members who have a colleague or colleagues who they feel would be particularly skillful at reviewing the data, they were welcome to make a referral to Creer.

Nancy Sims noted that other questions to be asked regarding the datasets included:

- What valuable information is in the datasets that we haven't noticed yet?

- Where is another place that similar data may exist?

Senate members continued discussion of possible data sources, and Carrillo Cabello reminded meeting participants that leadership is looking specifically for data that shows how P&A staff support the five commitments in the MPACT 2025 Strategic Plan.

It was determined that a number of senate members and P&A leadership would form a working group to review the data. Sieger, Jake Gage, Diane Douglas, and Colin Planalp offered to be part of the working group. Creer said he would reach out the following week to those who had volunteered to be part of the working group.

7. **Responding to Staff COVID-19 Concerns**
Creer then introduced Michael Oakes**,** interim vice president for research, Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), and Ken Horstman, vice president for human resources, Office of Human Resources (OHR). Creer added that the intention was to center today's discussion on the University's policies, guidance, and procedures around COVID-19 relative to the employee experience.

Senate member questions were collected and shared with Horstman and Oakes in advance of the meeting. PACC members Nancy Sims and Leigh Allen moderated the discussion. Oakes and Horstman answered questions that generally fell into four broad categories:

- Leave Options
- Masking
- Work Flexibility
- Vaccine Mandate

Regarding the current University masking and vaccine policy:

- Oakes said that the University's policy of staying home for five days after testing positive for COVID-19 is consistent with public health and medical leadership recommendations.
- Horstman outlined a few various masking scenarios:
    - Indoors at the University, everyone should be masked.
    - If you are working at the University, in a private office, with your door closed, you may remove your mask.
    - If you are on the same floor with other people, everyone should be masked.
    - If you are on a floor by yourself, and are anticipating interaction with someone, stay masked.

Regarding University employees hosting/holding an off campus event and not being allowed to require masking:

- Horstman explained that in a facility that is not overseen by the University, municipal, city, and/or state guidelines must be respected and followed. Event hosts may put up signs requesting or encouraging masking, may provide masks, and units may purchase masks and self-testing kits.
- Oakes added that those who are vaccinated/boosted and masked are relatively safe when attending this type of event. More data is becoming available showing that those who are vaccinated yet test positive are highly unlikely to end up very ill or in the hospital.

Sims asked if there is a reporting mechanism or enforcement policy in place around encountering someone, who can't be avoided, on University property and indoors, who is unmasked. Horstman recommended the following:

- Speak with the person and let them know you would feel more comfortable and safe if they would wear a mask.
- If the problem persists, report it to the supervisor or the local HR channel in the department.
- If there is an issue with reporting to unit leadership or supervision, contact central OHR or Health and Safety for assistance.

Sims asked if there is a metric the University will use to determine if/when to relax masking? Horstman replied that the leadership group tasked with addressing pandemic related issues is agile, familiar with changing course, and will take its guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Oakes added that there is no single metric that would determine the lifting of the University's mask mandate, rather a synthesis of many sources of information and data.

Regarding Work. with Flexibility (WWF), Allen asked Horstman and Oakes to respond to why the term "guidance" was used rather than a more prescriptive policy. Horstman shared the following:

- WWF was initiated in the fall of 2021 as a trial run. WWF was to be an ongoing workforce strategy, and it was too early to be overly prescriptive. The hope was that by implementing guidance rather than policy, administration would learn from innovative practices across the institution that could then be shared.
- The Delta variant, vaccinations for children, and the Omicron variant affected the rollout and implementation of WWF.
- Decisions about whether to apply a more uniform policy regarding WWF must also consider how space will be used at the University in the future. Meetings among those involved in the University's broad, cross-functional, space-utilization initiative have included lengthy discussions around the possible need for more central direction on hybrid work environments.
- The future of WWF is still a long term initiative and the University will be adjusting as it moves forward.

Allen next asked for Horstman and Oakes to comment on what has been learned in the past six months since WWF was launched, and, broadly speaking, how might that affect or change policies, structures, and rules that are in place as the University looks toward normalizing a more flexible work structure.

- When issues arise, OHR needs to be able to support supervisors as soon as possible, and get them to a place where they feel confident and comfortable making decisions for their own departments/units.
- Space and equipment needs, connecting with co-workers, and service delivery all have to be taken into consideration when a supervisor is deciding on how a unit will put WWF into practice. Horstman said he thinks all of those components can be adjusted to best serve a particular unit or department as we continue to learn more about best practices for WWF.

Sims moved to the last set of questions dealing with vaccine mandates, beginning with, “Is there support available for employees who feel they're experiencing bullying regarding their vaccination status?” Horstman responded that bullying of any type on University campuses is unacceptable and should not be tolerated, whether it’s about vaccination status or any other topic. Employees should report such events to their supervisor, their manager, or their HR contact. If someone is uncomfortable or unable to report to their immediate unit, they should reach out to central OHR. Employees can report concerns anonymously through U Report.

Sims then asked if the University’s vaccine mandate would shift given the Supreme Court’s decision regarding mandates for federal contractors. Horstman noted that while the federal decision had an impact, the University is mainly guided by the Minnesota Department of Public Health, and its own vaccination policy. If there is more direction that indicates the University’s policy needs to be updated, adjustments will be made, he added, especially as our community learns to live with new challenges.

Sims asked Horstman and Oakes to respond to questions regarding terminations for unvaccinated employees, and if they were aware of disparate impacts for non-compliance across employee groups. Horstman said the number of people on progressive discipline is quite low. During the attestation phase, a very small number of people, based on their own principles, decided to resign. Non-compliance with the vaccine mandate would involve a disciplinary process and ultimately could result in a termination.

Regarding a question about the challenging timing of the mandate (just as spring semester was beginning), Horstman noted that federal compliance was originally mandated for December 8, 2021, and subsequently moved to February 8, 2022. In order to have as much time as possible to address any lack of response to the mandate, University administration determined it was best to maintain December 8, 2021, as its compliance deadline. Non-compliance with federal regulations could have put certain grant funding to the U university at risk.

Horstman said that if senators had specific questions about situations in their unit or department that had not been answered today, he would be happy to receive an email and work with the OHR team handling such cases.

Horstman responded to a final question having to do with students who are also University employees being required to provide dual attestations. He said the process is still being discussed as it will also have to do with how vaccinations will be addressed for the fall 2022 semester. For students who have already submitted exemptions, Horstman said, a one-time transfer was used to cover the student’s employee status as well.

As new students are hired as employees, they will have to follow the employee process to align with current policy. Horstman said he has received feedback that the process is confusing and, while no solution is in place at this time, an OHR team is looking at strategies that would be legally compliant and make the process more manageable. Horstman said that information regarding vaccination is part of the onboarding process and is being added to job postings.

In the interest of time, Creer thanked Horstman and Oakes for attending today’s meeting and adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole
University Senate Office