

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY AFFAIRS (SCFA)

November 10, 2015

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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

[In these minutes: Employee Engagement Survey; Status Update on Implementation of *Works*]

PRESENT: Scott Lanyon (chair), Christina Bourland, Joe Price, Kathy Brown, Allen Levine, Theodor Litman, Christine Blue, Sophia Gladding, Tabitha Grier-Reed, Joseph Konstan, Robert Kudrle, Monica Luciana, Peh Ng, Lori Rhudy, Aks Zaheer, Geoff Rojas

REGRETS: Phil Buhlmann, Teri Caraway, Juanjuan Wu, Leah Reinert, Sam Stern

ABSENT: Ken Horstman, Teresa Kimberley, Ruth Okediji

GUESTS: Brandon Sullivan, director, Leadership & Talent Development, Office of Human Resources

OTHERS ATTENDING: Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

1. **Call to order:** Professor Lanyon convened the meeting and called for a round of introductions.

2. **Employee Engagement Survey:** Professor Lanyon welcomed Vice President of Human Resources Kathy Brown and Brandon Sullivan, director, Leadership & Talent Development, Office of Human Resources, who were invited to have a discussion about the Employee Engagement Survey. Vice President Brown began with a few opening remarks and then turned to Mr. Sullivan to provide information about the survey.

For every item on the survey, began Vice President Brown, there are suggested action steps that can be taken to improve employees' experiences at the local level. She went on to provide information about the higher level results and specifically focused on the experiences of employees of color and issues faced by associate professors.

Mr. Sullivan reported that the 2015 survey had a record response rate with 56% of faculty responding and 70% of staff responding. The goal of the survey is for OHR to gather input from faculty and staff on issues related to their work environment, and then to share the results with the collegiate leaders and give them support in taking action. The survey is not designed to be a precision/diagnostic instrument, but to gather broad input that can be the basis for further discussion. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) has held a number faculty and staff input sessions to help leaders get a handle on specific issues that the survey identified in their respective units. The office has also done some leadership and supervisory development work,

and in January two colleges will pilot a leadership development program for recently tenured associate professors.

Every year beginning in January, said Mr. Sullivan, the survey data is presented to the deans and their leadership teams. Shortly thereafter, department reports are available. OHR continues to promote the importance of communication of the data and sharing of the results. Unfortunately, said Mr. Sullivan, the survey results and any action being taken, are not being communicated very well.

Next, Mr. Sullivan turned members' attention to the executive summary for the 2014 survey and a summary of the key themes that was presented to the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) last March. He then asked members if they had any questions.

Professor Zaheer asked about theme four, differences in engagement responses by years of service, which says that as years of service increases, job satisfaction declines. This seems to conflict with theme three, which says that full professors are more satisfied than associate professors. Does this mean that associate professors are expressing their unhappiness? While there could be an element of this in their response, said Mr. Sullivan, it does not account for all of their unhappiness.

Professor Konstan emphasized if the survey is going to have legitimacy as a useful tool the results need to be communicated widely. Employees will be more likely to participate in the survey if they see the results, which has not been happening.

Professor Konstan asked about issues faced by women, men, minorities, etc., and whether the analysis took into account that these groups are not evenly distributed across the campus. He said he would be interested to know how much of the difference is attributable to women being treated in a way that is disrespectful/not supportive of their work or how much is attributable to units with a lot of women, for example, who feel they are starved for resources/support. Does this analysis adjust for these kinds of factors? Mr. Sullivan replied said this analysis does not adjust for these kinds of factors. Professor Konstan suggested having a multi-varied analysis that takes into account the predictors of feeling disrespected/unsupported, and indicate the values that are most predictive.

While Professor Konstan said he understands the survey is intended to focus on the collegiate and unit levels, there is a lot that can and should be thought about University-wide. The survey should be designed so it captures whether the source of an employees' dissatisfaction is local or systemic. The survey results do not always break the data down far enough. Vice President Brown commented that the decision has been made to not conduct the survey next year, and to step back and see what has been learned from the three surveys that have been conducted thus far and think about next steps. She thanked Professor Konstan for his comments, which she said would be taken into consideration.

Professor Grier-Reed echoed Professor Konstan's comment about the survey being too local/department focused. In looking at the results on faculty of color in the University context, for example, there are structural changes that people paying attention to diversity might interpret

as being antagonistic to diversity. Mr. Sullivan noted that the Office of Equity and Diversity has pulled together a taskforce involved in different survey work, e.g., Employee Engagement Survey, COACHE faculty satisfaction survey, SERU (Student Experience in the Research University) survey, for the purpose of figuring out how to bring the survey data together and look at diversity issues through multiple lenses. There is an opportunity to use the data to inform the institution about these issues.

Does the survey contain any open-ended questions, asked Professor Zaheer? Mr. Sullivan said there are a couple open-ended questions, but not related to diversity. Professor Zaheer suggested considering including open-ended questions in future surveys.

Professor Blue asked about directives OHR has given the colleges to address concerns raised by the survey. She said once the data is reviewed and discussed, in many cases nothing is done after that. Mr. Sullivan said OHR plays a consultative and advisory role in this process. Approximately a dozen or so colleges have taken OHR up on their offer of support and to help them to address issues that were uncovered in their schools. However, contacting OHR for support is not required. Vice President Brown said OHR did not provide a directive to any college or unit about what they should or should not do with the survey results. She added that all of the survey results are shared with the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost who strongly encourages the deans to share the results broadly within their schools.

Professor Ng asked whether the survey results are systemwide. Yes, said Mr. Sullivan. She added that she was happy to hear the survey would not be conducted next year because units need time to implement changes before the next survey is conducted. Next, Professor Ng asked whether the data shared includes written comments. Mr. Sullivan said out of concern for confidentiality, written comments are usually not shared. There would need to be 25 or more written comments before a report would be generated. Finally, Professor Ng asked if it would be possible to include questions on the survey pertinent to a specific campus. Mr. Sullivan said technically this is possible, and is being looked at for the next survey.

Vice President Brown commented that she has heard that the timing of the survey does not align well with the academic year; for example, the survey is conducted in October, the results are shared in January and then shortly thereafter it is the end of the academic year and many faculty leave for the summer, and then it is time for the next survey to be conducted. She said she believes taking a year off from the survey will hopefully give people time to digest what was learned from the first three surveys, and continue to work on developing action plans at their local or collegiate level.

In response to a question by Geoff Rojas about how the survey data is broken down, Mr. Sullivan responded that the survey data can be broken down to a minimum of 10 responses. Mr. Rojas suggested breaking down the data by job class or employee group versus just faculty and non-faculty. Professor Lanyon agreed that getting the results broken down further would make the results more useful to units. Professor Luciano commented that the question of the appropriate level of meaningful analysis in terms of how the data is aggregated is important to think about. She said if the data is drilled down to the department level and the numbers are

small, it makes one wonder if anything should be done with the information because it is not really representative of the department. Professor Lanyon suggested including verbiage when the next survey is sent out on accomplishments resulting from earlier surveys, which may motivate more people to take the survey. Professor Konstan added with small units there is the need to be able to aggregate the data up to a level that is meaningful while protecting anonymity.

Professor Kudrle asked if multivariate analysis is conducted on the data. No, not generally, said Mr. Sullivan. The purpose of the survey is to provide deans and department heads with the data in order for them to have discussions about the results rather being a research instrument. Professor Kudrle said he agrees with other members that the data should be collected and reported to allow statistical analysis. Professor Lanyon said in addition to the unit-based approach for collecting data, there are other ways that should be considered in order to fully take advantage of the information collected. He cited an example and said it would be interesting to get data on employee satisfaction when there are staff transitions, e.g., new department head.

Professor Gladding said what struck her when she took the survey was that it was so broad, and wondered if going forward there could be a way to track some of the questions to particular initiatives. Mr. Sullivan said there are a number of leaders in the University who are looking at using the data for this purpose.

Professor Lanyon said there is an opportunity from all of the surveys that are conducted on campus to get at best practices. For example, identify units in which people seem significantly happier than is typical on the campus, and look at what that unit/department is doing.

Regarding the issue identified in the survey about associate professors being less happy, Professor Konstan commented that he is not surprised by this given the workload issues faced by associate professors. He said probing into this issue, however, and figuring out alternatives and solutions would be valuable. Vice Provost Levine added when he was a department head this kind of information was useful in talking to faculty during their annual reviews and getting their perspectives on how the department is doing compared to the University as a whole. Another thing that will need to be worked out is when the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey is conducted next. In order for the COACHE survey to have a good response rate and a return on its value, it cannot be done at the same time as the Employee Engagement or other surveys.

Professor Gladding agreed that the survey results could be used to spark local discussions, but she wonders to what extent it could also be used to spark a more University-wide conversation, e.g., mentoring of associate professors could benefit from a broader discussion. Mr. Sullivan agreed and said in a number of his discussions with the deans they have raised the same idea.

After the results were sent to the units, did OHR ask the units to let them know what they intended to do about the results, asked Professor Lanyon? Not explicitly, said Mr. Sullivan. Professor Lanyon said there needs to be a mechanism for getting this information from units because without it there are no success stories to share. Professor Zaheer said getting this information requires a delicate balance because it would not be appropriate to require department

heads to report what they have done in response to the survey results. Initiatives or changes coming out of the survey can be subtle and take time to implement.

Hearing no further questions, Professor Lanyon thanked Mr. Sullivan and members of the committee for a good discussion.

3. Status update on the implementation of *Works*: Professor Lanyon called on Assistant Vice Provost Ole Gram to provide information on *Works*, a web-based tool for reporting and keeping up-to-date records of faculty activities and accomplishments (<http://works.umn.edu>), or, put differently, an online faculty activity repository system. Such a system, said Assistant Vice Provost Gram, has been discussed by faculty governance since 2006, and implementation of the system started in 2014 with early implementation partners including the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), the Carlson School of Management (CSOM), and the entire Duluth campus.

Assistant Vice Provost Gram walked members through a slide deck and explained that the system pulls information from three sources, 1) existing University data, e.g., demographic, teaching, grants, 2) data entered by the faculty member, and 3) University Libraries – publications and citation data. *Works* is also in part an attempt to get aggregate institutional data around faculty activities about which the University has relatively limited information such as media appearances by faculty, disciplinary awards, international and publicly engaged activities, etc.

Key features and requirements of the online faculty activity repository include:

- Reducing redundant data entry by only entering data once and using it for many purposes.
- Pre-populating data with information from existing databases allowing faculty to enter annual accomplishments more easily.
- Streamlining processes around report routing, the merit process, promotion and tenure, accreditation, salary equity reviews.
- Allowing faculty to quickly produce curriculum vitae (CV), activity reports and bio-sketches in sponsor-approved formats.
- Providing flexibility to allow for college and campus customization.
- Providing new data that will allow the University to highlight better the effects of its activities regionally and internationally.

Because CVs are very personalized, asked Professor Lanyon, would it be possible for faculty to upload a section of the document? Assistance Vice Provost Gram responded no that the system does not have this capability because the system by nature is structured as a database. Professor Lanyon voiced concern that *Works* may become a shadow system because faculty will need to enter information into *Works* as well as maintain their CV. Assistant Vice Provost Gram said that faculty activity reports are not personalized but typically department or college specific, and the University now already requires that faculty use a standardized CV format for promotion and tenure. While the system provides a great degree of customization in the types of reports it can generate, there is a need to create some degree of standardization of reports in order for

department heads, merit and equity review committees, and promotion and tenure review committees to make apples-to-apples comparisons of accomplishments.

Professor Konstan said any database should be structured to aggregate information and this system does not seem to have this capability, which begs the question if this is just another system for housing information that will eventually go into a faculty member's CV because it allows administration to more easily run reports. He wonders if the system will just create more work for people. Vice Provost Levine said he could see the system being useful when it comes to collecting numerous CVs when submitting a grant. Rather than having to hound faculty to update their CVs, it could be as simple as getting permission to access their report. Assistant Vice Provost Gram replied that the system relies on a single instrument and is precisely structured to aggregate information that will more accurately reflect the variety of activities in which faculty engage.

Professor Zaheer from CSOM (an early adopter) commented that overall the system works well. When faculty are being evaluated, for example, the same format is used; everyone is entering data in the same format. What has not worked so well is the transition because it does not map to certain categories.

Mr. Rojas noted that because a lot of the information entered into *Works* comes out of public databases could there be a problem with duplicative information. Will faculty have to continually edit their information? Regarding publications, said Assistant Vice Provost Gram, the expectation is that faculty members will have to annually update them in the system, either manually or by importing citations from Google Scholar, PubMed, or Experts.

Are faculty informed when their profile has been updated automatically in the system, asked Professor Zaheer? Faculty should be notified by email that their profile was automatically updated. Perhaps it would possible to send an email, said Assistance Vice Provost Gram.

Professor Luciana said she is confused about what information is automatically updated in the system and what information the faculty member actually has to go in and enter. It depends, said Assistant Vice Provost Gram, and noted that publications, for example, are imported on a one-time basis. Then, going forward the expectation is that the faculty member will enter or import this information.

Is it possible to delete information from the system, asked Professor Grier-Reed? Yes, in most cases, said Assistant Vice Provost Gram, but in other cases it is not possible. For example, scheduled teaching is not editable. Professor Ng said faculty need the ability to make changes in the system and cited the Morris advising situation as an example to make her point. Assistance Vice Provost Gram said there is a balance between making it easy for faculty by importing/pre-populating as much data as possible and having faculty enter all the information themselves. He added that the Morris advising issue will be addressed.

Professor Konstan said unless the bugs can be worked out of the system that he is worried that the University is investing in another system that it will declare a success just before abandoning it. Assistant Vice Provost Gram said it is for this reason that it will be a constant iterative

process and the dilemma will always be to import more or less information. The high level lesson the University needs to learn, said Professor Konstan, is to not implement expensive systems that are not necessarily better than the systems in place. Please be sure to periodically check and make sure the system that has been implemented is not worse than the problem it was trying to correct. Some of the issues being discussed are a matter of scalability, said Assistant Vice Provost Gram, and added that for colleges with period accreditation requirements (e.g., ABET, AACSB), for example, the system can be quite useful. If there comes a time when it is decided the system is not being embraced by all colleges, it will be scaled back to those colleges where there is a continued need and the system is working well. He added that the cost of not having a central software license would have been costlier because individual campuses and colleges were about to purchase their own software licenses for an activity reporting system. Real scalability and aggregation of institutional data to show the effect of University activities would also not have been easy to accomplish.

Professor Lanyon suggested for a future meeting having representatives from the schools/departments where the system has been implemented to share their experiences with members.

4. **Adjournment:** Hearing no other questions or business, Professor Lanyon adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate