Staff Advisory Committee  
General Non-Exempt Staff Meeting Minutes  
September 17, 2014  
Booth Ferris North

Present: Debra Joseph (chair), Kim Draude, Jamie Kiebler, Carol Kornhauser, Mike Lear, Mary Sakellaris, Jessica Transue, Ann Wagoner. Absent: Sharon Duffins, Frank Koczur.

Sign-up sheets were passed around before the meeting. There were 38 non-exempt staff present, including members of the Staff Advisory Committee (SAC). (It was noted that only two attendees were males). In addition, two exempt staff from Human Resources attended as guest speakers.

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 am by SAC chair Debra Joseph, who spoke briefly on what the Committee was doing. She reported on the SAC’s efforts to get non-exempt staff representation on College committees. Official language has been changed in the faculty handbook that specifically allows 1 non-exempt staff and 1 exempt staff to serve on Faculty Council committees such as the Budget Priorities, Quality of Campus Life, and Library committees. In the past, the descriptions said only “professional staff,” which had left the door open for exempt-staff to dominate these seats. The Fair Practices, Fringe Benefits, Common Hour and Sexual Misconduct Committees have also specifically invited non-exempt staff to serve. The Campus Sustainability and Public Safety Committees have not yet responded.

Debra introduced the members of the SAC that were in attendance – Kim Draude, Jamie Kiebler, Carol Kornhauser, Mike Lear, Mary Sakellaris, Jessica Transue, and Ann Wagoner, and those not in attendance – Sharon Duffins and Frank Koczur. Debra also explained the difference between non-exempt and exempt staff and she gave out the website address of the SAC and encouraged people to go there to read past meeting summaries, and to use the anonymous suggestion box link.

Debra then introduced Laura Fiore, Director of Human Resources at F&M, who was invited to speak on issues of concern to non-exempt staff. Laura introduced the HR personnel who accompanied her: Kelly Bertani, Christine Callender, and Maryann Wynn. Laura stated that two of the committees Debra had mentioned earlier have recently changed their practices/ by laws to specifically include a non-exempt staff person. These committees were the Fair Practices Committee and Fringe Benefits Committee.

Laura announced that open enrollment for health insurance will be earlier this year -- from October 20th through November 14th -- so that all information needed from employees is in place and new health insurance cards are in hand by January 1st, the start of the new health care year. To date Laura has scheduled twenty meetings with various departments across campus to help better explain open enrollment procedures, relay changes in health care policies taking place next year and be there to answer questions. There will be a campus benefits fair on October 23rd and October 30th that will include
representatives from the health insurance company, TIAA-CREF, and possibly a flu-shot clinic.

Laura then introduced Maryann Wynn to speak about the differences between exempt and non-exempt staff and the issue of pay versus compensatory time. According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, non-exempt staff who work over 40 hours/week in a 7 day period (F&M work week is Sunday through Saturday) are working overtime and should be paid time and a half for all overtime work.

Maryann then opened the floor to questions and was asked:

- “What if we do work 40 hours and are then asked to work more time and told to take that over time as ‘comp time’?”

- “Can non-exempt staff make the choice between taking comp time or being paid overtime?”

Laura Fiore acknowledged that this issue is a problem in some departments, with their full schedule of campus events and a large non-exempt staff workforce. She stated that she and VP of Finance Dave Proulx are working on a policy to make things uniform on campus in this regard and asked attendees if this was a common problem. When asked if there was any guidance on this for managers/supervisors on the College website, Laura and Maryann both responded that overtime policy is clearly stated on the HR website under “Policies” (both College policies, as well as links to applicable federal laws are included here). Laura mentioned that better training of managers/ supervisors was needed and was on HR’s to do list.

Moving on, the question came up concerning what some feel is the poor way that very important HR announcements are, or are not being communicated to employees. There were some complaints voiced from the audience about the Bell & Tower newsletter sending out repeats of announcements seen on Inside F&M, the College calendar, College website, or through email announcements and as a result, people were not reading Bell & Tower very comprehensively and are therefore missing a lot of HR information. Laura firmly reiterated that the Bell & Tower newsletter is the official place for HR announcements and that all-staff emails were inappropriate because HR had been hearing complaints from various people that they were sending out too many emails. She asked that everyone read the Bell & Tower every Thursday. She stated that HR announcements are headlined in Bell & Tower so that one can scroll down to the HR section to find them.

Laura then moved on to the topic of supervisor training. She expressed her opinion that if supervisors know the laws and College policies better, then they will be more effective managers. This is also on HR’s to do list.

Kelly Bertani was invited to speak next on the New Employee Orientation (NEO) program, which is a collaboration with multiple departments such as IT, Auxiliary
Services, Public Safety, and the Business office. Currently employees are immediately trained in edisk, Google apps (email, calendar), time sheets, purchase orders, etc. This happens every Tuesday morning and the training is available as an on-going resource. The purpose of NEO is to build a new, higher experience and Kneedler award-winners have assisted in the past as “FUM” (ie. F&M) mentors.

On the topic of performance evaluations, Laura noted that they are based on the fiscal year. However, each department can pick a time frame that works best for them, such as March to February, as long as it is a consistent 12-month period. Laura said that she was disappointed to learn that the self-evaluation form that was sent to supervisors was not widely shared on campus this past year. As a result, she will be posting it for employees on Bell & Tower so that we can download it and fill it out in advance of the evaluation. Additionally she hopes to hold a workshop to assist employees in filling out the self-evaluation form. The question was raised concerning employees who report to more than one supervisor. Laura responded that the supervisors should collaborate on the review even though the Banner system only allows one supervisor to be the supervisor “of record” (the one who approves timesheets). Laura noted that the Banner system allows HR to run a report for each General Officer that indicates when evaluations have not been completed and who is responsible. An online, “paperless” evaluation system is planned. Someone asked about managers who do not complete an evaluation and Laura replied that this is unacceptable and that the person responsible is now more easily identified and held accountable.

A question was raised concerning the impact of the performance evaluation on pay increases if a supervisor fails to complete an evaluation by the fiscal-year break. Laura noted that this would have an impact and is definitely a concern. She said that she hoped that there are not employees who have not been evaluated in the past. An additional question was raised about a non-uniform evaluation period and what impact this may have on merit increases if evaluations are done late in the fiscal year and they do not work their way through the General Officers, HR, and Payroll in time for the fiscal year turnover. What is the penalty to supervisor for tardy evaluations? How does this system work fairly if the time period for performance evaluations varies across campus by six months? If my performance evaluation is done on a calendar year basis, is my merit pay raise held up until 6 months later when the new fiscal year begins. Laura stressed that Banner makes it critical that deadlines are adhered to but she did not directly answer the questions since this issue was somewhat confusing.

Laura then spoke about training for new hires and/or people who change jobs on campus. She announced that HR and ITS were working on a site called “Your Workplace Tools” that would have documentation and instructional videos showing employees how to use campus computer systems and software and what proper procedures are for conducting College business such as purchase orders, timesheets, catering, room reservations, etc.

Laura concluded by thanking attendees for their feedback and challenged all employees at F&M to be part of the solution by pointing things out and providing suggestions on what might be done to fix items of concern. She would like to hear suggestions for
manager training and encouraged all to attend new hire training, both to potentially learn something new or to let her know what information is missing or can be improved upon. Finally, once the new training website is up, we were asked to look through it and let HR know what is missing or can be improved upon.

In final questions, one involved non-exempt staff membership on committees: If a supervisor objects to staff serving on committees outside the office, how can this be resolved? Laura advised that this was something that would have to be negotiated and balanced against the daily staffing needs of the department (committee-work balance). Staff should be aware of the level of commitment required of committee service and talk to their supervisor about why and how you can contribute and why committee service is relevant and beneficial. If never allowed to serve, staff should talk to Laura Fiore.

Someone asked about the accuracy of leave balances in Inside F&M and HR admitted that some were incorrect and must be fixed by payroll due to peculiarities /problems with Banner. Another person asked if this had been communicated to employees and Laura responded that it was reported at this moment. Another asked again about the Bell & Tower avenue of communication since some of this is not HR related and Laura restated the position that this is the new avenue in lieu of emails to prevent an over influx of emails. In conclusion, an attendee asked about sick time. In the past this could only be taken in one-day and one-half day increments. Due to the capabilities of the online timesheet system, sick time could now conceivably be taken hourly and presumably even in 15 minute increments. However, it was not necessarily made clear if this can be done yet.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Lear and Carol Kornhauser