UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Business Meeting Minutes
October 28, 2020
Carmen Zoom
8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

In Attendance:
Chrissy Sprouse, Steven Loborec, Shea Ryan, Steven Blalock, Randall McKenzie, Justin Lahmers, Debbie Pond, Faith Kline, Stacey Houser, Lauren Gannon-Evans, Tina Bogac, Holly Davis, Sherri Hall, Kynthia Droesch, Kate Blevins, Emily Kelley, Annie Bingman, Katie Watkins, Danielle Jennings, Ferdinand Avila-Medina, Sandy Otis, Jennifer Elliott, Courtney Gandy, Brittany Savko, Patrick Weeks, Jacob Hollar, Elisabeth Hosket, Brittany Crall, Laurel Van Dromme, Brandon Gibbs.

Call to Order

Adoption of the Agenda

Approval of the Previous Meetings' Minutes
- September 23, 2020, approved
- October 14, 2020, approved

Executive Committee Reports
Chair:
- Chrissy stated that all comments received regarding pending changes announced last week to employee tuition assistance benefit have been shared with OHR’s VP Susan Basso and other university senior leadership and there is reconsideration underway.
- Chrissy also noted that President Johnson’s recent announcement of an increase in graduate student stipends is also being addressed in tandem with the concern from staff about tuition assistance changes. There is a concern that some stipends hourly rates may become higher than some staff members’ annual earnings.

Chair Elect:

Communications:
- Shea stated that we are promoting USAC events happening in the next couple weeks with good traction on USAC. Lauren Gannon-Evans announced that 424 are currently registered, and she is inquiring about increasing the Zoom registration link to higher than 500 just in case.

Secretary/Treasurer:
- Laurel gave an overview of the current USAC accounts.
  1. For our main account, the blue table at the top of the page is a general summary. Our carryover from the previous fiscal year is $7,536, plus we received $10,000 from
OHR for a total of $17,536 for this fiscal year, at this point. We are still waiting for the refund check from CampusParc of $1,300 for Expo parking vouchers arrive.

- Our projected expenses are minimal this year at $4,339, because of working remotely and not holding in person events. These budgeted expenses are mostly communications costs and live captioning for our Wellness Webinars and Senior Leaders series.
- The negative figure of $6,525 in the FY21 column for wellness events is a hold-over from the previous FY, when Cvent accidentally sent us a 2nd refund for sponsor payments in the late spring for the cancelled H&W Expo. The refund to Cvent, however, occurred in this FY.
- We do not have dues this year, because of the pandemic, for Ohio Staff Council of Higher Education, which Lauren Gannon Evans explained is comprised of staff from state and community colleges across Ohio and the group reports to Ohio’s Chancellor of Education. Annie Bingman is the new USAC representative. Lauren Gannon-Evans just completed her term representing Ohio State University.

2. USAC also has a development account with OSU Foundation, which currently holds $1,613.84, and receives $10 in gifts each month. We are looking to feature this in the spring during the Campus Campaign as few staff and faculty are aware of this fund. I believe there have not been distributions from this account in recent months and years. I will research this and report about it at our next business mtg.

Subcommittee Reports

Inclusive Excellence (IE):

- Ferdinand Avila-Medina mentioned the summit for ERGs went well to support their development across the university, although they are more robust within WMC. In addition to ERGs, affinity and other groups are included. This summit has been in the work over the past year, and he expressed thanks for previous the Inclusive Excellence Subcommittee’s earlier work.
- The Subcommittee has reviewed the past five years’ applications to USAC members for diversity or lack thereof from across university, and review is in BuckeyeBox. Brittany Savko reported that on average we have 19 applicants/year, and that the number of applicants has decreased since 2016. When it comes to years of service, most applicants have less than 5 years of service to the university; most have 2-4 years of service.
  - The highest number of years of service was 35 years. 78.4% are Unclassified A&P staff members, 9.3% are senior A&P, and 7.2% are Classified Civil Service, 5.2% of applicants did not share. The Columbus campus comprises 95.9% of applicants, with approximately 1 regional campus applicant/year.
  - No USAC applicants from Marion or ATI-Wooster campuses in past 5 years. Most colleges or units are represented. WMC has a relatively high number of applicants, followed by Office of Student Life and COM.
- Stacey Houser said that a colleague of hers had a false impression that USAC membership required a minimum level of management or experience (aside from years of service at university). We can take this into consideration for how we recruit new members this year. Steven Loborec asked for suggestions to enhance recruitment. Chrissy said she wants to get quotes from current members and/or supervisors to support applications. Laurel suggested holding an online information session, since we can’t meet in person. Sherri Hall suggested including a senior leader in a video or promotion of USAC. Ferdinand suggested a statement from
managers and supervisors about the value of USAC membership to the unit. Holly Davis suggested promoting that USAC meetings are open to all staff, as that was how she initially became involved. Chrissy mentioned that we need to be mindful that some information we learn is not always ready for public dissemination. Stacey said that we should market the professional development, networking, and influence on university policy that USAC members gain from serving on USAC. Elizabeth Hosket suggested we have USAC members mentor applicants to reduce any concern or fear of applying. Kate Blevins suggested that we feature USAC alumni in marketing to speak about the value of serving on USAC. Steven Blalock suggested we have drop-in zoom coffee conversation about USAC during the recruitment period, for a less formal approach. Chrissy will also be promoting USAC with deans and senior leaders, asking them to identify staff who ought to apply.

- Ferdinand stated there is a lot happening across campus related to diversity and inclusion with no university-wide strategic plan. He has proposed a centralized calendar of the relevant events, and the university will need to determine who will do this. There is great variation across the units for accountability on these efforts. Ferdinand will submit a proposal to Senate Diversity for how to address this at the deans’ level, for greater similarity across the university. Stacey Houser asked if Ferdinand has heard any discussions regarding the development of a governance committee at the senior leader level of the university, because the mission of implementing important D&I initiatives is everyone’s responsibility and a more executive committee would assist in making that happen across the university.

Governance:
- Steven Blalock expressed special thanks to everyone in USAC who helped review the applications for Staff Career Development Grants. All the scores are being reviewed by Steven and Kate Blevins in conjunction with OHR staff with final determinations to be made soon. Kate mentioned that the Governance Subcommittee will begin USAC Bylaws review in the next month or so, and will reach out to other Subcommittees.
- Kate also shared timeline on developing New Employee Orientation program by the university and its inclusion of USAC.

Outreach & Engagement (O&E):
- Lauren Gannon-Evans reported that registration is required for the HR Conversation series with 424 currently registered. A colleague from OCIO will be providing logistical support on the back-end. There will also be a Diversity & Inclusion panel discussion hosted by USAC as part of our Senior Leaders Conversation series on November 17, and a Wellness Series event “Preventing Burnout” with OSU EAP on November 12. In the spring we will host a Conversation event with university president Dr. Johnson. USAC members are meeting with local SACs with currently 12-13 scheduled. Chrissy mentioned that there may be a meeting for USAC with local and regional SAC leaders with Dr. Johnson to be held online in December.

Staff Affairs (SA):
- Stacey Houser stated the committee has been working on winter recess policy, and the next step is to meet with WMC leadership given there are many unionized employees there. A separate discussion with regional campus leadership to ensure that their concerns are also addressed.
- Tina Bogac reported on revisions to the toolkit for staff recognition with a plan to highlight staff online. There will be a clear suggestion from the Subcommittee, probably next month, to all of USAC to consider. Managers and supervisors (or
colleagues) will be able to nominate someone with the reason a staff member should be recognized.

Task Forces
Health & Wellness:

OHR Liaison Report

• Brandon Gibbs noted that there is discussion around addressing mental health more clearly or directly in our paid leave policy. Chrissy has worked with Kristi Hoge, who wants to talk further about any proposed changes. Chrissy added that the discussion is not about adding more days off, but rather more clearly defining how sick time can be used to include difficult days emotionally. Laurel Van Dromme mentioned that CWO Bern Melnyk wants to be involved in this discussion given her support of mental health & wellbeing; and she asked if a member of USAC's new taskforce on health and wellness be included in OHR's discussion? Chrissy replied yes, and added that she sent to OHR the draft statement from CWO Bern Melnyk on the topic.

• Brandon mentioned that the university's pandemic-related extension on use of accrued vacation hours until the end of December has not yet been extended further at this point. OHR leadership will probably review this decision in the coming month or so. Steven Loborec mentioned that he will be posing a question on this topic to OHR leadership in the HR Conversation event tomorrow. Chrissy mentioned that she had asked CWO Bern Melnyk to speak to all of OHR, because of the burnout felt across the department.

Items for Informational Purposes

Update by University Provost Bruce A. McPheron (9:45 – 10:30 a.m.)

• Provost McPheron has appreciated meeting with USAC over the past 4 or 5 years. He stated the past 7 months has been the longest 7 years of his life. He is watching the news about the virus progression on the news, with hospitalizations increasing. University leadership recognizes that many of us are affected not only by work, but also in other personal ways by the pandemic. He said quickly sending employees home to work in March was much easier than determining how to have employees return safely. He is talking with university president about what returning “more closely to normal” in fall of 2021 will look like, and then continuing to work towards more normal throughout that academic year. Through contact tracing, we are seeing overwhelmingly that positive cases are coming from community transmission rather than a classroom or workplace setting. There are a lot of factors to consider to increase in-person instruction, including higher risk for flu transmission as well as Covid-19. Senior leaders are discussing “what normal looks like.” He noted that we've been working from a distance and things are progressing surprisingly well, and this can inform our future: what does flexible work look like, what is an on-campus work assignment? He is going about collecting information in two ways:

1. Bruce is talking with Council of Deans - COE Dean Dave Williams said that this is first year that all of his freshmen have had every class be with less than 50 students in the room. Why would we want to go back to large lecture courses, he asked? So deans will have input into positive learning outcomes for future planning.
2. Randy Smith will be talking with groups across campus, including USAC, to learn the good, bad, and ugly about the past 7 months and to craft our future planning and operations. This will be occurring now through February-March 2021. For example, senior leaders want to apply flexible work policy more fairly across university.
• Kate Blevins, who works in WMC IT, said her group is looking to review their footprint, including some challenges: how is there software to review space at an organizational level: what equipment gets to go home with someone (for example, rather than giving other eqpt, an employee could have a menu of items from which to order and purchase at a discount and then the employees keeps the equipment after their employment).
• Bruce says university is also looking at healthcare infrastructure and changes at Office of Student Life about how to reserve/use space. Please send him (or to Chrissy to give to Bruce) additional topics/suggestions.
• Elizabeth Hosket asked about psychological support for students and employees studying/working remotely. She noted that we are missing socialization from the “old normal.” Bruce agreed that he is hearing this concern from deans in addition to issues of racial justice and politics. He recognizes the lack of balance between work and personal lives for those of us working from home. Ohio State’s Counseling & Consultation Service is working diligently with students; many public health ambassadors are trying to work with students living on campus to reward positive health behaviors by students. We haven’t done that with employees. OSU’s EAP is designed to provide support to employees, and we may need to complement their efforts. He asked if USAC is talking with OHR VP Susan Basso to address the spirit component of our work culture? He will look to see how university can support the connections between employees.
• Bruce asked: for the future, what are the things we’ve learned about productivity: differences in commute time have been good for productivity, but it can come at a cost. How do we set up guidelines for managers to establish equity across units and campuses, and even across every county for OSU Extension.
• The concern for changes in tuition benefits for employees is being heard. The issue has been under discussion for a long time, but it’s clear that the timing of announcement and implementation were not well considered. OHR is looking to pause the timing of implementation on the issue. The change to 6 credits from 10 credits is due to our change to semesters from quarters, and we should probably have made the change in 2012, when we changed the academic calendar. We may consider supporting 2 courses (regardless of credit number, which vary more widely across courses than it once did). This policy initially affected in-person courses as there used to be few online courses, and many programs now offer courses online and can be completed outside of normal business hours. These factors are being considered by senior leadership in greater depth again. And also looking at benchmark data, as Ohio State’s offerings in this area are pretty robust compared to peer institutions.
  o Steven Loborec expressed appreciation that university leadership is reconsidering the decision. Bruce said appreciation goes to OHR VP Susan Basso. Bruce reported approximately 1,000 employees take approximately 7-10 credits/semester. Steven also mentioned a research study that shows that Columbus has wide income disparity in Columbus, the 2nd greatest in the nation. Academic opportunities usually require advanced degrees and this tuition assistance program is a good way for Ohio State to be a leader in reducing this disparity of our community. Therefore, he suggested, we need a disproportionally large tuition assistance program to help reduce this disparity. Our staff population is more diverse than our faculty and student populations, and there is a huge income disparity among staff. Giving our staff opportunities to grow professionally is important.
  o Courtney Gandy, who works on Lima campus, added that their community demographics are similar to Columbus but that is not obvious on the Lima
Reducing or changing the tuition benefit will significantly impact regional staff.

- Bruce mentioned that the access to courses has improved/increased a lot over the past 7 years especially through ODEE with offerings of online certificates and not just bachelor degrees. Giving employees more career choices in terms of career progression is a good thing. He will continue reporting on this topic to Chrissy and Steven. He expects a more global communication to the university in very near future.

- Bruce stated there are no university-level conversations about a university-wide furlough. There have been furloughs in some units, such as a) Wexner Center for the Arts, which is mostly funded by philanthropy, b) the Athletic Department, and the c) events staff. Many employees who were put on furlough, were brought back to work to assist with Covid-19 testing, which have proven to be more durable jobs than we expected. Budget reduction scenarios at approx. $175M across university (not WMC) has been less than we initially feared. We enroll still approximately 68,000 students and we have a larger first-year class by 1,000. Federal funding to the university, including through the state of Ohio by CARES funding, has helped prevent more draconian measures.

- The university president is largely focused on managing the university through Covid-19. Two important issues for her are:
  1. Continuing to address racial and social justice issues, including opportunities for our employees, and
  2. Innovation and entrepreneurship.

Bruce appreciates USAC sharing important issues with senior leadership, and looks forward to when we can meet in-person again. He reiterated that the future should not look like the past. We need to seek out the best practices, and acknowledge the challenges.

**Items for Group Discussion**

**Breakout Sessions**

**Adjournment** at 10:33 a.m.