UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Business Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2021
Carmen Zoom
8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

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

Call to Order
Adoption of the Agenda
Approval of the Previous Meetings’ Minutes January 27, 2021

Executive Committee Reports
Chair: Chrissy reminded USAC Subcommittee leads to get their drafts for the USAC Annual Report in soon. She asked all USAC members to have their cameras on during next USAC business meeting, so that Shea can take a picture for the Annual Report, because we have few images this year because we have not had in-person events.

Chair Elect: Steven noted that six, virtual New Member Information Sessions have been scheduled and will be held on every weekday and at different times of the day to try and be as accessible as possible. These dates will be shared with staff across the university via social media, USAC emails, etc. He thanked Kate Blevins, Steven Blalock, and Elizabeth Hosket, who will be leading the information sessions. Shea launched the New Member Recruitment page on the USAC website: https://usac.osu.edu/usac-new-member-recruitment/. Application process is open now, and the deadline for applying is March 7. The live, virtual interviews of applicants will occur on April 5-6. Kynthia Droesch asked how many USAC positions are open for 2021-2022. Chrissy answered 10.

Communications: Shea has already received 39 request for more information on New Member Recruitment process. More campus-wide communication will be going out later this week or early next week. The same is true for USAC’s “Staff in the Spotlight” and our upcoming Conversation with the University President to be held March 10.

Secretary/Treasurer: Laurel gave a brief update on Safe Campus Scientific Advisory Group, on which serves as USAC representative and which fellow USAC member Tina Bogac also serves because of her work In FOD’s office for Environmental Health and Safety. We have continued to meet, albeit less frequently since the spring and summer, and that is expected to increase again in early March. A couple pathways for dealing with vaccinations and testing are being considered to assist senior leaders in making decisions in March regarding returning to campus in the fall. The pathways deal with different levels of broad vaccination that might or could be in place for employees and students, and what we may want to ask of our employees and students related to testing as a result.
**Subcommittee Reports**

**Inclusive Excellence (IE):** Brittany Savko informed us that IE is continuing to hold listening sessions with ERGs across the university.

**Governance:** Steven Blalock reminded USAC to send him USAC bylaws updates by end of February. Feel free to join information sessions on Staff Career Development Grants, if you are interested in applying for one this spring.

**Outreach & Engagement (O&E):** Lauren Canno Evans stated that plans are underway for USAC’s Senior Leaders conversation series with the University President, and that updates about USAC are ongoing with Local and Regional SAC, including a new one set for Ohio State Lima campus on February 22. To encourage more USA members’ involvement, Katie Watkins added that it’s very easy to present the USAC material to the Local and Regional SACs, because there is already a PowerPoint slide show to use. Lauren mentioned that she is hearing concerns from staff about returning to work; Chrissy mentioned that she is hearing this from other units, too.

**Staff Affairs (SA):** Stacey Houser noted that 12 applications were received for the first Staff in the Spotlight feature. Faith Kline is setting up meetings, including with regional campus colleagues, about Winter Recess and additional complicated questions are being raised, such as how this may work for cost share positions, etc.

**Task Forces**

**Wellness:**

**OHR Liaison Report**

Brandon Gibbs mentioned that “Report = Support!” training is required by all employees (and students) by end of May 2021. Employees who do not complete the training will not be eligible for any merit increase, which take effect in September. Please share this important education with your unit and colleagues. A USAC member asked if the negative consequence infers that there merit increases will be awarded this calendar year? Brandon responded that he does not know if this decision has been made or not.

**Items for Informational Purposes**

**USAC Officers Election Process Overview** by USAC Officers and USAC Election Task Force (8:30 – 9:15 a.m.)

- Brittany Crall reviewed the timeline for USAC officer elections: nominations will be open for submission to Katie Watkins February 15 - 26, when nominations are due; and nominees will be notified March 1. Nominees who wish to be considered will need to submit their Platform Statements and related materials by March 29. Election packets will be sent to USAC members by Katie Watkins and Brittany Crall on March 31; and elections will be held April 14.
- Katie explained that Chair-elect candidates will be given 10 minutes to present their platform statement with 5 minutes for Q&A with USAC committee; Vice Chair candidates will be given 5 minutes. Voting will occur by secret ballot via Qualtrics, which worked very well last year. A candidate must receive more than 50% of the vote to gain election. We’ll have a run-off, if no one receives more than 50%.
- Brittany stated that nominees for officer roles will need to submit their resume or vita to show their relevant experience, a platform statement (no more than 300 words), an acknowledgement of their ability to fulfill necessary time commitments for the officer
role; and supervisory approval. These materials can be found in USAC’s BuckeyeBox folder for Election Task Force, and nominees will also receive all the required materials.

- Chrissy spoke about duties of being Chair: presides over all USAC meetings, including the Executive Committee meeting which occurs on the 1st Wed morning of the month. Every year is different for Chairs, in her case with everything virtual. She works with a number of University senior leaders, including the President (and her Chief and Deputy Chief of Staff), SVP for OHR, SVP & CFO for B&F, SVP for Administration & Planning; CWO, Executive Dean for Regional Campuses, SVP Athletic Director, VP & Chief Diversity Officer, SVP for Institutional Equity, SVP for Advancement and more. As Chair, Chrissy is responsible for USAC budget and she approves all expenditures for USAC as requested by the Vice Chair – Secretary/Treasurer. Some responsibilities are different each year, and in this case it includes the Provost Search. Some years she has spent 40 hours/week on USAC work. This year she has faced a lot of low morale because of the pandemic, as she handles emails to the USAC website and/or directly to her own name.# account. She responds personally to all incoming feedback to USAC.

- Chrissy is in contact regularly with senior leaders and/or their administrative assistants or chiefs of staff, as well as attends many university committees, for which the frequency of meetings varies. These meetings include the Board of Trustees, University Senate and Senate Steering Committee, One University Health & Wellness Council, Career Roadmap Steering Committee, Shared Values Initiative, etc. She is working diligently to explain the role of USAC to the new president and other new senior leaders. She began thinking about Subcommittee leads and ISAC retreat, although unfortunately we did not get to hold it in person. Usually, USAC Chair sits on the stage of Commencement and attends a bowl game, but these events did not occur this year.

- Chrissy does not want to discourage anyone to run for office, although she recommends having two years of USAC membership before running for Chair-Elect in order to get a deeper understanding of the breadth of USAC’s activities, including the work of the Subcommittees and Task Forces.

- Steven Loborec spoke about his role as Chair-Elect as a year of Chair-in-training. This allows for time to learn more and provide good continuity. He attends many of the senior leaders meetings with the Chair to help build relationships, and this is these very rewarding. Chair-elect serves in place of Chair, when absent, although that has not happened at all this year! Chair-elect leads New Member Task Force for USAC, and reviews communications from USAC. He is looking for a partner in next year’s Chair-elect who is engaged and excited to build new relationships and understand USAC’s value.

- Steven noted that some of the meetings he regularly attends for USAC as its Chair-Elect include Board of Trustees, University Senate and Senate Steering Committee, Parking Advisory Committee, Employee Emergency Fund Committee, Big 10 Group on Staff Advocacy and more.

- As Chair-elect, Steven also receives all the emails that come into USAC website, which help him be aware of the pulse of staff, so that we can communicate concerns and feelings from staff to senior leaders. This feedback mechanism can be good for learning unintended consequences to share with senior leaders. He also looks forward to working on New Member Orientation, which he missed last summer, because he was on paternity leave after his daughter’s birth.

- Laurel outlined her role as Vice Chair – Secretary/Treasurer including preparation of agendas and minutes for USAC Business Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings. She shares early draft of minutes with guest speakers to ensure their remarks are well represented. Laurel seeks approval for expenditures from the Chair, and processes
those transactions, to ensure checks and balances in USAC accounts. She receives monthly reports on USAC accounts from B&F colleague, and prepares USAC budget and its monthly treasury reports.

- Chrissy also added that when USAC meets in-person the Vice Chair – S/T prepares the meeting room, loads any PowerPoint presentation for speakers, etc. She added that Laurel now creates brief PowerPoint slide decks of our USAC Business Meetings which we post online following meetings for people who don’t want to wait and read the approved minutes.

- Shea explained that a marketing and communications background is not necessary for the role of Vice Chair – Communications. Shea did not have this when he began in this role, and he has found colleagues across the university to be very helpful. There is a lot of consistency from year to year, and in format. If you are organized, then this office is a good fit. Vice chair - Communications is responsible for USAC messages to staff via email, which we generally send monthly, and social media channels, and ensures that our materials follow USAC brand guidelines.

- Shea provided an overview of the preparation for his communications. He is building a guidebook for this role to assist his successor. He showed the behind-the-scenes side of the USAC website, which operates on WordPress. He learned how to post images, minutes, etc., largely by watching YouTube videos. USAC’s social media channels include LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook page. We can tie these together for consistency across each channel or individualize our postings on each. Everything can be scheduled in advance, and there is a good historical archive for annual USAC activities (e.g., USAC new member recruitment). USAC uses Constant Contact for its emails, and there is simple templates for creating content. Constant Contact also provides good data analysis on visitors. OnCampus postings have regular deadlines; and the same is true for HealthBeat, which is specifically for employees of WMC and health science colleges. The university’s branding website has a lot of good resources that can be downloaded to create flyers, including approved images, graphic designs, and editorial style directions including how to refer to The Ohio State University.

- Shea mentioned that in addition to USAC meetings, this officer role attends meetings of Senior Communications and Marketing Council, which is where he learns about university-wide initiatives and is a good place to ask questions. The Vice Chair – Communications works closely with Subcommittee leads to be sure their activities are shared with staff widely and in a timely manner. Shea put a lot of time in creating a template for the USAC Annual Report in his first year in this role (three years ago), and since then the amount of work is much less to update year-to-year. He saw creating the template as an art project, and now it is easy to populate with new copy and images.

Suicide Prevention in the Workplace by Sharon Saia, MSW, LISW-S, CEAP, and Laura Lewis, LPCC-S (9:15 – 9:45 a.m.)

- The Suicide Prevention Program is led by Assistant Director Laura Lewis, while Sharon Saia is Director of EAP & Behavioral Health and serves on the committee. Sharon can be reached at Sharon.saia@osumc.edu. She noted that the Ohio State’s Suicide Prevention Program was initially focused on students and has been expanded and adapted to serve employees. Sharon and Laura partnered to create OSU CARES = Caring & Accessible Resources for Employee Support.

- The scope of the problem is that 1 in 5 US adults live with a mental health condition, and only 1 in 3 receive treatment in any given year. The barriers to seeking help include social/institutional issues, stigma, culture, and policies. However, our millennials are helping to break down these barriers. Stress alone can push people to have suicidal
thoughts due to feeling overwhelmed or not knowing what to do next. Employees are at high risk for suicide due to a lot of organizational change; stress, depression, and anxiety; balancing pressures between work, family, outside concerns. Adults aged 45-64 years have the highest rate of suicide in the Ohio.

- From the journal Nature, the report of stress on USA adults caused by Covid-19 has increased to 42% in December 2020 from 11% in January-June 2019. The combination of social isolation due to the pandemic, the resulting economic downturn, and racial and social injustice has not been seen before and has been very difficult for many.

- We are creating a more robust suicide prevention plan for across the university. Laura has run a similar program for students at Ohio State, and it is based on the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, which has a screening tool for college students, including undergrads, graduate and professional students. OSU uses this tool, which is predicated on confidentiality, and is voluntary, with colleges. A completed tool is automatically sent to a doctoral graduate student (with the Suicide Prevention Program), who responds with tailored suggestions although no one knows the other’s name. This tool is often times the first time for a student to communicate with a counselor. This is intended for students who are having difficulties. Of the students who participate in this program: 95% showed clinically significant symptoms of a mental disorder, 90% were not receiving mental health treatment at the time; 90% returned to website to read counselor responses; and 30% engaged with at least one online dialogue with a counselor. This model is being adapted for Ohio State employees.

- As possible next steps, Sharon and Laura recommend:
  - Sharpen your knowledge and skills about suicide and how to reach out to those in distress:
    - Register for a REACH Training (individual or group)
      suicideprevention.osu.edu/reach/#groupreachcontactform
    - Sign up for a Reach Out Session (group)
      suicideprevention.osu.edu/reach-out/
  - Learn about the offices and programs at OSU dedicated to preventing suicide in students, staff, and faculty:
    - Invite the OSU Suicide Prevention Program and/or the OSU Employee Assistance Program to speak at a staff or faculty meeting.
  - Be an advocate for suicide prevention! Spread the message that hope and help exist!
  - If you need support for yourself please reach out to your Employee Assistance Program: 800-678-6265 or eap@osumc.edu
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800.273.TALK or text 4Hope to 741741

- Laurel Van Dromme asked whether this program, in addition to its direction by EAP and funding from OSU HP, is collaborating with CWO. Yes, Sharon answered, adding that she talked with CWO Bern Melnyk yesterday. Laurel also asked whether or not the program provides services for university employees who may not have OSU Health Plan insurance? Sharon responded yes, and she invited USAC to be involved with the committee moving forward. Steven Loborec acknowledged the need and importance of this group’s work. Laurel suggested to Randall McKenzie, who agreed, that the USAC Wellness Task Force will consider how USAC can work with this program to help serve staff.

- Chrissy asked about how this program is connected to the university’s Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Task Force, and whether it is still active? Yes, the student suicide prevention program was a key leader in that group’s work. And while the task force has completed its work, the implementation committee is continuing to operate.
• Patrick Weeks asked if family and friends of employees can be serviced by this effort or other resources. Sharon responded that community resources will be shared, but the Tool would not be given to a non-employee. She added that benefits-eligible family members can receive supports from EAP.

**Staff Career Development Grants Overview** by USAC Governance Subcommittee Lead Steven Blalock and OHR’s Veronica Herrera, Learning & Development Program Coordinator, and Steven Mentz, Talent Management Coordinator (10 – 10:30 a.m.)

• Steven Blalock noted that the review of Staff Career Development Grants applications by USAC with OHR is really good example of USAC’s purpose to support of staff at the university. Staff Career Development Grants are awarded to help pay for education and training costs to enhance a staff member’s work, including conference and seminar registration fees, books and materials or courses, and travel expenses (which are currently on hold by the university due to the pandemic).

• Steven reviewed the rubric for evaluating applications. The rubric, a short video summary of the grant review process, and a FAQ document have been uploaded to BuckeyeBox in the USAC folder for Governance as resources for both USAC and OHR reviewers. The evaluation rubric is also available on USAC’s webpage for staff to see in advance of their application. Strong applications include a clear explanation on how the grant will enhance an employee’s work, as well as their unit, and the university; and clear explanation of budget costs with detailed attachments showing these expenses.

• Timeline includes: SCDG application may be submitted March 1 – 31. Materials will be available for USAC and OHR review April 9 – 26; SCDG awards will be announced May 7; and the funding period covers May – September 2021.

• Veronica reviewed the online application and evaluation portal for reviewing SCDG applications. She informed everyone that for any USAC members who are applying for a SCDG, she will change that USAC member’s access so they can apply during the application window, and then back to review access during the review period. (They will not review their own application.) She highlighted that USAC members should be reviewing applications in the March 2021 review tab. Laurel asked for confirmation on keeping records that, while any applications should not be kept by USAC members following the evaluation of the application, USAC members should keep their notes or completed rubrics per university data policy guidelines. Veronica confirmed these distinctions. Steven Mentz noted that some applicants, whose grant requests are denied, may ask for feedback as to why, at which time the reviewers’ will be asked for their notes and comments. OHR and Governance Subcommittee will work on updating the grant rubric after this cycle of grants.

**Items for Group Discussion**

**Adjournment** 10:36 a.m.