UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Business Meeting Minutes
March 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, Ferdinand Avila-Medina, Sandy Otis, Steven Blalock, Randall McKenzie, Elizabeth Hosket, Emily Kelley, Katie Watkins, Danielle Jennings, Faith Kline, Holly Davis, Patrick Weeks, Kate Blevins, Brittany Crall, Sherri Hall, Courtney Gandy, Brittany Savko, Kynthia Droesch, Stacey Houser, Lauren Gannon-Evans, Drew Miller, Jacob Hollar, Laurel Van Dromme.

Call to Order
Adoption of the Agenda
Approval of the Previous Meetings’ Minutes February 24, 2021

Executive Committee Reports
Chair:
• Chrissy informed us that our USAC Annual Report meeting with President Johnson will be the last week of April.

Chair Elect:
• Steven reported that the New Member Task Force received 14 applicants, which now enter the review process. Over the last couple years, we’ve averaged 12-19 applications/year.

Communications:
• Shea noted that he is continuing to promote our activities, like the webinar on SCDG in conjunction with OHR next week.

Secretary/Treasurer:
• Laurel reported that she will be meeting with our B&F colleague later this week to learn what reports she can run in Workday for USAC accounts. To date, we have not had expenditures since 2020.

Subcommittee Reports
Inclusive Excellence (IE):
• Ferdinand Avila-Medina stated that IE is reviewing USAC website for updates that can be made regarding language that is more inclusive in nature.

Governance:
• Steven Blalock mentioned the webinar for tips on applying to SCDGs, which will be held in conjunction with OHR, is next week. After the USAC Bylaws review, USAC’s selection of Staff Senators will occur later this spring.
Outreach & Engagement (O&E):
- Lauren Gannon Evans mentioned that 447 staff members registered for the President’s Conversation event. Chrissy noted that she will give an introduction and ask rapid fire questions, then Steven Loborec will ask major questions.

Staff Affairs (SA):
- Sandy Otis shard that a second round of Staff in the Spotlight nominees are being reviewed.

Task Forces Wellness:
- Randall McKenzie stated that they will be presenting more about the Task Force at the next USAC Business Meeting about their draft Wellness toolkits.

OHR Liaison Report

Items for Informational Purposes
University Financial updates by CFO Michael Papadakis (8:30 - 9:00 a.m.)
- Mike Papadakis began by noting that COVID-19 hit the university last year like a perfect storm, as every unit was touched financially, including but not limited to State of Ohio Funding, Research Funding, Enrollment Levels & Delivery, Student Experience, WMC, Auxiliary Businesses, etc.
- Revenue sources, because of the pandemic, included the CURES Act, CARES Act, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which have all included elements to support the university; Medicare Advance; and the State of Ohio, which passed the Capital Bill in December 2020 and then rescinded its reduced State Share of Instruction to institutions of higher education in January 2021.
- Overall financial position for the university remains strong, and in fall 2021 we ought to be back to pre-COVID-19 levels, due to our size, diversity of operations, and discipline in financial operations. More students did choose to go fully online in the fall than had been anticipated. But investment income went up over the past year. Federal stimulus funds helped to pay for expenses related to COVID-19, including PPE and testing. WMC increase in some patient care increased margins. Athletic Department budget is down $61M due largely to lost ticket revenue. Our AAA/AA/Aa1 bond rating is good evidence of financial strength. Our equity is up by almost $1B. Overall revenue down approx. $350M from March – December 2020.
- Cost savings measures that were implemented in Spring 2020 included the following, and none will be permanent.
  1. Freezing travel, while business-essential travel may be back online in Autumn 2021 or Spring 2022.
  2. Pause on most hiring (which is down 35-40% of what we usually do), and this will continue to be monitored for some time.
  3. Pause on compensation increases, although ACMP is now being examined with senior leaders for FY22.
  4. Pause on most purchases.
- Senior leaders are meeting weekly to determine several ways to create a debt-free undergraduate tuition bill, especially through fundraising and financial aid. Operating efficiencies will continue to be looked for and moved to enhance financial aid. The
University is also looking to State of Ohio for more support, including Ohio Governor DeWine’s Ohio College Opportunity Grants (OCOG) with an increase of $500 to the 2,000 that is awarded to financially needy Ohio State students. University is also looking to grow its online educational presence for increased revenues.

- Federal government is paying for COVID-19 vaccines and therefore, in turn, we as taxpayers are paying for them.
- Plans at regional campuses are to grow enrollment, which will increase financial strength there. Furloughs and layoffs have largely been avoided aside from Athletic Department, whose structure is different than rest of university.
- Regarding the issue that some graduate student stipends’ hourly wages are now higher than that of some Rec Sports staff members, Mike referred us to speak to OHR Interim VP Paul Patton. The goal was to move graduate students income to top of peer institutions, but we’re not there yet. The $15/hourly rate for staff is higher than most grad student stipends’ hourly rate, but not all.
- We don’t benchmark specifically for staff compensation levels across the Big 10, but we do generally benchmark ourselves across all “people costs.” We benchmark ourselves by utilizing data from the Academic Benchmarking Consortium (ABC Insights), which includes some Big Ten Schools (e.g., WI, Illinois, Rutgers) and some other large public universities from around the country (e.g., including TX, NC, FL, etc.). In some areas we are competitive, and in others we are not. We’re just starting to benchmark in academic areas as well. This is our first year utilizing ABC data.
- Mike was asked if we are considering adding to our higher education degrees by offering more technical programs. He is not aware of anything outside of what we already do at the regional campuses. He suggested that we ask the Provost since this is an education-related question.
- He is looking forward to progress in research with University President’s focus, the collaboration with JobsOhio, more investment in technology and commercialization, and adding to our online education given our infrastructure investments over the past 8-9 years. He noted that as we look at university’s history, we’re in the third and largest construction boom (more cranes on campus now than ever before), so there are great new physical spaces coming online in next couple years. A lot of opportunity for hiring will occur to fill those spaces.
- Equity factors into all of our discussions in the financial planning arena, including AMCP (Annual Merit Compensation Process), which we are currently discussing for FY22.

**Return to Campus Survey Results by CWO Bern Melnyk** (9:45 - 10:30 a.m.)

- Bern introduced us to one of her pugs, and stated that she is working to expand WMC’s Pause4Paws program across the rest of the University. Steven Loborec noted that the Governor and University President experienced it last week while visiting the University’s vaccination site. Bern is optimistic that there is wide-spread support among senior leaders now.
- Bern noted her appreciation for USAC and its support of wellness for staff. She coordinated a “Return to Campus” survey in August and repeated it in December to learn more about staff readiness to return to campus, barriers to returning to campus, safety needs, stressors, mental health outcomes, and wellness needs. For the study method emails were sent in December to 2,266 staff, who had completed the survey in August and there was a 56.4% response rate from staff, most of whom are from the Columbus campus. Valid and reliable instruments were used to evaluate anxiety and depression as part of the overall survey.
Regarding a question on how often one is seeing the appropriate safety protocols, faculty answered higher than staff (62.4% and 50.4%, respectively). The top 3 concerns were identified: 1 - passing COVID-19 to family and loved ones, 2 - personally contracting COVID-19, and 3 - other members of the Ohio State community not following safety protocols.

The rates of anxiety for staff decreased between August (29%) and December (27.6%), but increased significantly for students. Depression increased slightly for staff, from 10% to 11.3%, over the same timeframe.

Health disparities exist for staff (and faculty), but they vary by mental health condition. For staff, the highest rates of anxiety were reported by Other (33%), Hispanic (28%), and Non-Hispanic White (28%). The highest rates of depression were reported by Non-Hispanic White (12%), Asian/Pacific Islander (11%), and Other (11%).

The behaviors among staff to cope with greater anxiety and depression included increased use of alcohol, eating more or increased consumption of unhealthy foods (up to 28% from 23%), increased sleep, and—in good news—had sessions with a mental health counselor.

Burnout over the two surveys increased among staff to almost 40% from just over 30%, showing the toll of the lengthy pandemic. OCWO is continuing to increase its wellness activities across university. In December, as in August, staff are reporting that connecting with family and friends, increased physical activity, and daily dose of gratitude helps people feel better.

Overall results show a continued need for accelerating access to mental health services along with preventive and early intervention programming. Bern is encouraging senior leaders to walk the talk and support their staff and faculty to engage in healthy lifestyle choices and wellness programming. COPE with COVID is an acronym of brief, evidence-based strategies:

- Control the things we can,
- Open up and share feelings,
- Practice daily stress reduction tactics,
- Engage in mindfulness; and
- Count your blessings,
- Overturn negative thoughts into positive ones,
- Volunteer to help others,
- Identify helpful supports and resources, and
- Do your part to prevent spread of the virus.

Four behaviors will help to prevent 80% of chronic conditions:

1. Physical activity – 30 minutes x 5 days/week,
2. Health eating – 5 fruits and vegetables/day,
3. No smoking, and
4. Alcohol in moderation – no more than 1 drink/day, if you drink.

What is your motivation to make healthy lifestyle choices? If we don’t make time for healthy behaviors now, then we’ll have to make time for chronic health conditions later. Self-care is necessary for safe and great care of others.

Last month, she launched the “Mask on/Mood up” initiative. Next time you put on your mask, do 3 good things for you: 1 - take 3 deep abdominal breaths, 2 - Be Kind to yourself with a positive self-affirmation repeated 10 times, and 3 - Be Kind to others and
tell or show you are grateful for them and why. She suggested: ‘I’m too blessed to be stressed.’ and ‘I’ve got this!’

- Please tune in to the Stay Well and Calm series on Wellness Wednesdays, which are 30-minutes long and each wrap ups with skills-building activities to help build new habits. A new, 3-week LEADINGWELL series for managers and supervisors launches on Tuesday, March 23, 2-2:45pm.
- Steven Loborec appreciated what her team is offering staff for wellness and raised some employees’ concerns that there is more that can be done to be more inclusive and that some supervisors have not supported staff taking time to participate in wellness activities. Bern responded that she started meeting several years ago with college and unit leaders about their own units’ healthcare data (de-identified) to encourage their leadership engagement and role-modeling. She also reiterated the new program to support managers’ interest and engagement in wellness.
- Kate Blevins mentioned that it would be helpful to have senior leaders also walk the talk in their communications, etc. Bern agreed, and noted that she is asking senior leaders to participate in the weekly Movement Mondays on the Buckeye Wellness social media channels at 11:50 a.m.
- Steven also mentioned employees’ self-imposed guilt about taking vacation, as he experienced recently, so that it will be good for senior leaders to share how they unwind and what they do on their time off.
- Stacey Houser suggested the value of volunteering to boost morale.
- Bern closed her remarks by reminding us that USAC members may register for Health Athlete for free.

**Items for Group Discussion**

**USAC Bylaws & Staff Senator Selection process updates by Governance Subcommittee** *(9:15 - 9:45 a.m.)*

- Steven shared the timeline that all proposed amendments are now available for all of USAC to review with a plan to vote on changes in April and/or May. Approximately 70 changes, most of which are grammar and wording choice, were received on the Bylaws and Operations Manual together, although only changes to the former need to go to the President’s office. Please review the Excel spreadsheet in BuckeyeBox folder, which Steven shared with us in a recent email.

  - The spreadsheet has 4 tabs: 1 - Bylaws Processes (major changes), 2 - Bylaws Grammar/wording, 3 - Operations Manual Processes (major changes), and 4 - Operations Manual Grammar/wording. We aren’t debating major changes today, just reviewing them. Please share any concerns or questions about proposed changes in coming weeks with Steven and Kate.

  - We will vote on a package of amendments to the Bylaws, including both Processes and Grammar/wording. There was debate that led to consensus on amendments during last review. If we feel there are particular issues of concern, we may want to pull those items out separately and vote on them. Proposed major changes include:

    1. To meetings – adding virtual, online, and/or hybrid meetings, not just in-person.
    2. To voting – add virtual, online and/or hybrid.
    3. Include language recognizing the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Steven will be reaching out to IE for their review of specific language before group discussion occurs.
4. No longer limit officers to two consecutive terms.
5. How to remove a member, and who has the authority to do so. Details, such as giving a warning, etc., will be included in the Operations Manual. Part of the proposal is that OHR be involved in this process to protect privacy, and a full vote for removal will be required of all USAC.
6. Expand opportunity for alternate members be eligible to reapply for full membership when their temporary term ends, rather than needing to wait a full year.

- Next steps include sharing a reference guide via BuckeyeBox for more context and background on the proposed major changes. Please share feedback with Governance Subcommittee. We will be adding proposed wording on wellness throughout USAC Subcommittees.

Adjournment 10:31 a.m.