

STAFF ASSOCIATION MEETING MINUTES

February 11, 2009

PRESENT

Bonny Barsi, Elinor Cherry, Judy Chestnut, Carol Courtney, Laurie Fasciano, Nancy Fields, Carla Fuller, Marsha Gaulin, Chris Grant, Lynn Galvin, Ellen Levasseur, Jim Mello, Sandi O'Donnell, Lisa Parker, Jason Pomposelli, Debbie Rau, Jennifer Sanborn, Sebby Sorrentino, Terry Spencer, Bonny Stoecklin, Lois Vanesse, Jillian Vollentine

PRESIDENT REPORT

Jason Pomposelli opened the meeting at 1:02 p.m. The January SA minutes were accepted as submitted.

SPEAKER

Assistant Provost Jim Mello presented to the association the current draft of an academic strategic plan. This plan, created by the council of deans, will serve as the "driver" of the institution's strategic plan, and is happening concurrent to the work of the values committee. Jim presented the discussion as a listening session to gather feedback from staff in reaction to the draft. (Staff members were also invited to attend either of two open meetings on the plan.)

Comments offered are detailed below:

- A number of members sought clarity on how the goals named in the plan would be shaped into concrete objectives. There was concern that the plan would have no relevance in day-to-day work without this next level of planning taking place.
- There was extensive conversation on the need for more opportunities for staff development (both in terms of professional learning and advancement). While University courses are available to employees, there are few financial resources for other training programs, and many staff members feel they are required to do their jobs without adequate preparation and support.
- In reviewing Goal #1 of the plan, there were a number of bullets in the faculty section that members believe should be included in the staff section as well. For example, we should strive to increase the diversity of our staff as well as our faculty (second bullet), and we should promote and celebrate outstanding staff achievement (fifth bullet).
- In reviewing Goal #3 of the plan, it was suggested that staff should also receive training on equipment, in the use of new learning technologies, etc. (third bullet under "Supportive Community").
- In general, some present for the discussion found the plan to be disconnected from the realities of their work, and believe the plan fails to capture the complexity of an academic system that includes faculty and multiple layers of staff (e.g., academic support staff continue to operate without adequate supervision and/or centralized oversight). Others believe staff can and should be empowered to take greater ownership in the work of the University, and that progress toward these goals needn't wait for permission or the completion of the plan (e.g., staff members can submit their

own accomplishments to UNotes, resulting in greater recognition of outstanding staff achievement).

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no reports.

STAFF ASSOCIATION REPORTS

There were no reports.

OLD BUSINESS/DISCUSSION

Jason continues to communicate with Grounds and Facilities in response to complaints about the rate of snow/ice removal from walkways. He suggested to them that the major arteries that are the first to be cleared be publicized to employees so they can seek out these pathways to their offices. In addition, all present were reminded that late openings allow for walks to be cleared; employees shouldn't expect to access their offices earlier on these occasions.

Jason has learned that the "apron" near Auerbach will be fixed once the weather allows (icing is a problem). A member asked if the plowing plan can allow for the back row of spaces in "A" lot to be opened for parking rather than the snow piles; traffic at the close of the day is extremely difficult with the loss of this row.

Members described the recent closing text messages as unclear and confusing. Jason will communicate with Jon Easterbrook about how late openings are announced.

Jason announced that there is not an obvious technical venue whereby non-member staff people can be surveyed about their interests in Staff Association activities. This question about the needs and wants of those who do not join the association formally will be shared with the incoming executive committee as something that still needs to be addressed.

NEW BUSINESS/DISCUSSION

There was no new business.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The nominating committee is awaiting suggestions for next year's Staff Association leaders. Nominations are to be submitted via Survey Monkey, and will be accepted through Friday, February 13, 2009.

"Dress for Success" is currently accepting women's business attire for underprivileged women; donations can be made at DressBarn stores this week, and by contacting Dress for Success directly in the future.

Daffodil days are coming! Orders will be placed by March 2nd through building representatives, and will be delivered during the week of spring break.

Town hall meetings on the employee flexibility program will take place in March. Watch for these dates and learn more about this new program.

Jason's Joe on Friday, February 13th will celebrate the years of service of staff and faculty. All in the community are invited to attend.

Jennifer Sanborn encouraged women staff to consider nominating themselves or their colleagues for the Laura Johnson Initiative for Women Leaders, and also noted the availability of WELFund grant money. See www.hartford.edu/welf for more information on the grants program.

Chris Grant shared that nominations for the community service award given at the fall kick-off will be sought in the coming weeks and months. Watch UNotes for details.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:03pm. Next meeting will be March 11, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. in the Simsbury Suite, Gengras Student Union.

Jennifer Sanborn
Corresponding Secretary