

Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs

October 22, 2019

2:00-3:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Judy Alford, Lori Buchanan, Patricia Donovan, Tami Foutz, Katrina Loan, Susanna Rinehart, Curtis Mabry, Sally Schupe, Sue Teel, Serena Young, Dani McNiel (support), Liz Daidone (support), and Jonathan Falls

Meeting Minutes:

- Call to order and welcome by Serena Young
- Introductions- new Student Government Representative- Jonathan Falls and new Staff Support for CSPA—Liz Daidone
- Approval of Agenda- Approved by 1st- Susanna, and 2nd- Lori at 2:05pm

Appointment for Employee Benefits Committee (EBC) needed – one staff member needed to serve on the Employee Benefits Committee

- Patricia Donovan volunteered to be the representative to the Employee Benefits Committee.

Employee Benefits Committee Report- Given by Sue Teel

Discussed in their first meeting on what to focus on for the year:

1. Reviewing leave for all employee types and looking at inconsistencies across the board. What can be done?
2. Various improvements to existing benefits - retiree benefits (health care stipend, retiree pension, and other benefits); expanded cash match for all employees; flexible retirement options; expanding full benefits to 50% FTE employees rather than 75% and above FTE employees.
3. Tuition—investigate any institutions that have reciprocal agreements and look at options for expanding benefits to family members of employees.

This coming month EBC will be looking into more detail on the three topics above.

Discuss potential topics to cover this year in CSPA:

The floor was opened for discussion, and CSPA discussed a variety of different topics.

Serena mentioned that she learned at Staff Senate that the \$500 stipend slated to be given to all salaried employees making \$35,500 or less is not necessarily guaranteed to be an ongoing benefit. The university only committed to funding the first year. Serena noted that the general perception is that the stipend will be an annual benefit.

Someone asked about where the stipend originated, why it was only for employees making \$35,500 & less, and why the stipend was given in January rather than closer to the time of when parking passes are renewed. It was determined that the stipend was suggested by the Staff@VT Task Force, which focused on many issues affecting staff. Two particular issues noted by the Task Force were the high cost of childcare and the high cost of parking, which affect lower pay band employees disproportionately. There was discussion around how to recommend this stipend be paid more than one year. It was mentioned that staff senate may be the one to make that recommendation, with the note that CSPA supports it.

Katrina spoke on her experience of working on the Childcare Committee in the Staff Senate and how they suggested 35.5k in their original report. This report was given to the Staff@VT task force. She talked about the recent survey sent to employees regarding childcare and that employees making above 35.5k still struggle with childcare costs, so there is more work to be done.

Another topic discussed was the idea of reviewing compensation packages in regards to pay increases that are not consistently distributed by departments. It was mentioned how difficult this would be to do since it's up to the senior leaders of each area to decide how the pot of money should be distributed. While it's supposed to work on a merit-based system, how merit is determined and percentages allotted varies by department. Curtis mentioned that HR asks for a justification of why if someone gets less or more of a percentage when that percentage is over a certain threshold. The group seemed to agree that creating consistency in this practice would require changing the culture of the university, and it may be better to develop communications on how to use the funds and best practices for the merit pay process.

The commission members also asked about the training for supervisors/managers. Sue Teel mentioned that the Talent Development team has been hard at work with developing the curriculum and is advertising its registration. There are 4 modules, with 4-6 cohorts piloting the new program. Dani McNiel mentioned that we could ask Marsha McKay, the director of talent development, to discuss what they developed. Dani McNiel also added that new supervisors are being targeted and invited to attend the new supervisors/manager training.

Commission members were also interested in the level of satisfaction vs dissatisfaction for staff. Various members spoke about how there are some departments/divisions at Virginia Tech where staff are treated well and others that treat their staff very poorly. It was discussed that the performance evaluations should give employees an opportunity to rate their supervisor, but people fear retaliation despite it being illegal.

It was suggested that CSPA's role is to ensure that employees know where to turn when they are having issues with their supervisor, suggestions included the ombuds office and employee relations. One place for the commission to start would be to see how utilized these avenues are and what we could do to increase awareness and usage.

The topic of manager/supervisor training will be tabled until Marsha McKay can come speak to the commission at its next meeting.

Next Steps:

A survey will be created and distributed before the next meeting for CSPA representatives to take to gauge the interest in the different topics we will work on as a commission.

Adjournment- 2:52pm