



Western Kentucky University Staff Council
Monthly Meeting, March 6, 2019
Jody Richards Hall – Cornelius A. Martin Regents Room

Minutes

Call to Order (Jennifer Miller, Chair) – 9:04

Jennifer welcomed guests.

Roll Call (Fallon Willoughby, Secretary) – Not in attendance: Mike Loftis, Jennifer Toomey, and Christopher Ware

Guest Speaker at 9:00 AM – Dennis Chaney, Barren River Health District

Mr. Chaney is part of the BRIGHT Coalition who were responsible for writing a grant from the American Cancer Society (Tobacco Free Generation Campus Initiative). So far 81 institutions have received one of these grants to help their campus become smoke/tobacco free. WKU has created a task-force charged with creating a plan to make our campus smoke/tobacco free. The plan includes the drafting and implementing a new policy, which is scheduled to be finalized in the near future. Issues also being addressed by the task-force include marketing, compliance, and cessation assistance related to students and employees. Mr. Chaney stated that compliance issues are still being addressed, but generally these types of policies are self-enforcing. Mr. Chaney mentioned a cultural issue that Kentuckians struggle with because KY has produced tobacco for generations. Thus it is important to educate on what tobacco is costing Kentucky in terms of health issues, medical issues and taxpayer dollars.

Questions from Council members included the following topics:

- *Enforcement aspects, whether people could smoke in their car, and how do we re-educate or work on getting people to follow it (after games, in rented out areas, etc.).*
- *Potential economic impact as well as recruitment issues.*
- *Phase-in method for implementing a policy.*
- *Noncompliance citations and reporting violations.*
- *Objective of the policy.*

Mr. Chaney answered that the objectives of the process are for overall health purposes. WKU is the last state funded university without this type of policy. WKU wants to improve the health and well-being of our population. To speak to economic issues, our employee work force ranks last in health in the country – insurance rates are higher because of smoking/tobacco use. This impacts new businesses coming into Kentucky, such as health benefit costs and lost time worked. Mr. Chaney stated that BRHD is working with schools to education about vaping/e-cigarettes, etc. Schools are implementing Smoke Free Policies as well throughout the state, including vaping, etc.

Approval of Prior Monthly Meeting Minutes

- *February minutes – changes to wording throughout. Motion (Christy) and seconded (Tracy). All in favor.*

Acknowledgement of Guests/Open Discussion with Staff

Ruthene Glass (Gordon Ford College of Business): Wanted to know how the KERS change was going to affect staff. Ms. Glass mentioned the email about KERS which addressed the new bill being proposed. She questioned whether or not the KERS sick day policies will be changing. Ms. Glass also had other concerns such as the fact that employees are worried their jobs, as they still feel insecure, and are afraid of jobs being consolidated or replaced by technology. There is also the concern that if the retirement cost to the university cannot be absorbed, and people will be bought or replaced, then employees need to be made aware of it.

Answer from various staff council members: Per our understanding from what the President spoke about during our February meeting, the new bill would mean that new employees could not select KERS as a retirement plan option, and current employees (whether vested or not) would have the choice to opt out or stay in it. Any future changes to KERS and the actual way it works would only be legislative changes, not from the university. However, the bill is only currently in the House, and has to make it through many more rounds before a full vote. As written, the bill could positively impact current KERS employees. Universities are trying to put policies in place to control costs associated with KERS. According to Jennifer Smith via text to David Brinkley: The bill is about employee choice (determining the type of retirement they want) – if any current employee wants to keep their KERS pension, they will be able to do so. Benefits should also stay the same (in reference to sick days).

For any current updates: <https://www.wku.edu/govrelations/legislativepriorities.php>
House Bill 358:

Member Reports

Officer Reports:

- Chair (Jennifer Miller) – Jennifer asks us to think about some of the goals that we want to achieve before July based on our original list. Jennifer spoke to Staff Leadership Institute about Staff Council. Many did not know about staff council, and were interested.
 - **Meeting with President:** Expressed gratitude to the President for attending the February Council meeting and noted that the visit enlightened our Council members about his vision for the campus. It was suggested that the President consider meeting with other smaller groups across campus to share the same message.
 - **Meeting with Provost:** Discussed her vision for communication across campus and creating a team framework/methodology with the college Deans. It was suggested that the Provost, much like the President, should consider participating in conversations with smaller groups across campus, specifically, attending departmental faculty retreats.
- Vice Chair (Mike Loftis) - absent
- Treasurer (Jenny Toomey) - absent
- Technology Officer (Chris Ware) - absent
- Communications Officer (Rachel Cato) - Social Media is not picking up or growing in viewership – do we want to get rid of it? There is a question of low participation because of low morale across the university. Feedback from the rest of Staff Council: It is a good tool to have to share messages. We have to be consistent with our message. We do need to remember that minutes from the meetings go out, and all are allowed to come to meetings, so social media does not

have to share everything. Staff are also able to call and contact any member of staff council. Some ideas for the future:

- Open office hour each week or month for staff council members, and lobby area forum where we could meet with staff as they have concerns.
- Sharing pictures of guests or of meetings
- Showcase Staff members individually
- Chance to win gift cards by sharing social media

Staff Regent Report

There were a few major items to report from the Board of Regents meeting:

- The transfer of property of the Minton House for the College Heights Foundation – David Brinkley asked if there were any additional university funds being requested to help maintain the property and the answer was no.
 - David expressed concern about the management of foundation funds across the university.
- Athletic Director, Todd Stewart, was approved to receive a salary increase. The increase is funded by the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation, which had budgeted for the change.
 - David believes that the Board should be approving budget items before they take effect, not after, and is working on a solution for this. David was adamant that the university would not contribute E & G funds whatsoever to pay for any increase of his salary – nor would the increase effect any academic scholarships or athletes. It will not cost the university any more money.
- The board acknowledged the President's fulfillment of certain metrics in his contract, which awarded Dr. Caboni a one-time bonus of \$40k – it is not a salary increase.
 - Question from staff council: are there any more contracts that will award bonuses in the future for the President? Answer: There are more metrics to be met in the contract, and they get more difficult, but if he does meet those he will get more money. They can be amended but that has not been brought up. David will have input on those in the future.
- Multiple individual raises/merit raises put forth, there were only 2 that David disagreed with, but if he voted no it could have put all of them on hold. Therefore, in order to be fair to all, David voted yes.
 - David expressed the need for policies and procedures to provide a way to handle specific issues in a document that is slated to be voted on in full.

Open Discussion- David addressed an earlier issue brought up about morale on campus. He stated that the President will tell you that we have turned a corner. David has stressed back to the President that we need to make sure everyone else on campus knows this. We discussed the need for improved mid-level communication, noting that based on conversations with our constituents, that there are pockets of leadership (i.e. Deans, department heads, supervisors, etc.) that possibly have not communicated information in a way that sustains better morale. Although the level of communication from the President and the Provost has increased since January 1st, Jennifer Miller and David Brinkley have both suggested the President go on a quasi-campus tour and meet with small groups similar to his visit with the Council in February. The people who have a direct line to the President see the change and the vision, but it is not translating to anyone else, potentially due to lack of leadership from upper management.

- Other comments from council members: –
 - Staff reporting to faculty feel unsupported (consistent topic across the board)
 - It's important to be able to see the leadership and feel the change and get an occasional appreciation. It would be nice to see the President around.

- The lack of having a stable environment is impacting morale.
 - A suggestion would be for the President to share information with mid-level staff during staff meetings – positive messages.

Discussion of Monthly Committee Reports

University Committee Reports:

- University/Academic Calendar Committee – n/a
- Benefits Committee – n/a
- Campus Library Advisory Council – n/a
- Campus Master Planning Committee - Committee members were provided a draft of the “WKU Campus Master Plan 2019” and asked to review and provide feedback.
- Parking Appeals Committee – n/a
- Parking and Transportation Committee – n/a
- Preston Center Advisory Board – n/a
- Staff Excellence Committee – n/a
- Sustainability Champions – An interim Sustainability Officer has been appointed. The Office of Sustainability is still up in the air so far as placement. Fallon, Rachel and the Sustainability Office are working to coordinate the Earth Day Festival on April 18th, 10 AM-2 PM at Centennial Mall. Departmental tables and volunteers are welcome and encouraged.
- President’s Committee for Diversity and Embracement – n/a
- University Senate – n/a

Standing Committee Reports:

- Staff Leadership Committee – n/a
- Book Scholarship Committee – n/a
- Staff Satisfaction Committee – Met to go over the Staff Survey results and plan move of action.
- Fall Break Brunch Planning Committee – n/a
- Election Committee – Met and reviewed current changes planned to the constitution and bylaws. Decided to do some more editing on them before presenting this information to the Council.
- Staff Mentor Program Committee – Fallon Willoughby met with Randall Bogard to go over some mentor expectations and a training program. Will meet with full committee on 3/7/19 to discuss ideas and a path moving forward.

Ad-hoc Committee Reports

- Staff Tenure Recognition Committee – n/a
- New Employee Training Committee – on hold

Council Business

WKU Legislative update – addressed earlier in the minutes.

Staff Survey – The Staff Council Satisfaction Committee and the President have seen the survey results. The board will be given the survey results when they meet for committees in April (Just like the Faculty survey). All of Staff Council will see the survey results after the meeting. Four comments with names will be redacted, as they have been in the past. The Staff Council satisfaction rating did go up. The results will be posted on the website when the February minutes are sent.

Discussion

Council Email Review

FY2019-2020 holiday calendar (two emails now) – The idea for July 4th days changing (getting the Friday off instead, or perhaps both days off) has been presented to the HR Staff, as HR are the ones who create a calendar and present it to the President’s Cabinet. This has not yet been done for the next fiscal year or summer.

Nonexempt/exempt statuses and possible changes-Per Payroll Manager, the change in the FLSA regulation remains in perpetual pending status. Once the dollar amount threshold is decided and approved by the federal government, the transitional group’s payroll schedule will be finalized.

Questions regarding new time keeping method – Per Payroll Manager, we are moving forward with a plan to have everyone record their time in TopNet. This plan would be similar to the paper timesheet in place now with employees recording their time in and time out in TopNet and submitting to their supervisor at the end of every pay period for approval. Time keeping is tedious and repetitive but it is very necessary to complete timely and accurately - on paper and/or electronically.

Announcements

Next Meeting Date/Time/Location

- April 3, 2019, 9:00 A.M., Jody Richards Hall, 2nd Floor

Notable Events

- Board of Regents Committee Meetings: April 12, 2019, Regents Room, JRH
- Commencement Ceremonies: May 10, 2019, Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium
- Special Recognition Ceremonies by college: May 11, 2019, E.A. Diddle Arena

Adjournment – 11:31 am