

The WKU Staff Council held its January meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2006. Members present were: Patty Booth, LySandra Bowles, David Emerson, Barbara Johnston, Jeff Jones, James McCaslin, Charles McCoy, Chester McNulty, Ann Potter, Angela Robertson, Tina Sneed, Heather Stubblefield, and Lauri Warden. Members absent were: Timmy Givens, Pat Jordan, and Mike Thompson.

Bill Basham has been representing the staff on the university Benefits Committee. He will be retiring soon, so a replacement will be needed from the staff. After nominations and discussion, the decision was made to appoint Debbie Carroll to a 3 year term.

James McCaslin reported that two proposals were brought before the Benefits Committee at their December meeting. The first proposal was to formalize a rotation for the three staff members appointed by the Staff Council and the three faculty members appointed by the University Senate. The second proposal was produced in response to the recent controversy surrounding health insurance funds. The proposal would formalize in writing that the insurance fund be set up in such a way that the money would be used exclusively for insurance purposes and that "No transfer of funds shall be made from the employee health plan account(s) to another university account without prior review and consideration by the Benefits Committee."

With regard to the "missing money", in essence, the funds were not "missing," but were never budgeted or applied to the insurance fund in the first place. The Benefits Committee is quite concerned about these actions, but also realizes that we must work from this point forward. To curb these actions in the future, the Committee has approved the proposals and sent them to the President.

Ann Potter questioned the lack of a formal orientation for part-time employees. Human Resources conducts orientation for new, full-time employees, which consists of benefits and tax paperwork completion, most of which would not apply to part-time employees. This takes approximately three hours. Other orientation, such as for location of buildings/departments, telephone, e-mail, computer technology, and department-specific information is not covered. It was agreed that some specific information for part-time employees was needed, and Patty Booth will look at adding information to the Human Resources website to help new, part-time employees understand what benefits are available to them. It was pointed out that one-on-one training for computer/e-mail is available from Information Technology. Anyone interested in setting up this type of training should call 745-7000 and request training.

The issue of employees being hired as full-time employees, but being kept on part-time status without benefits for extended periods of time was discussed. It was explained that some employees are hired as temporary employees based on a special need. These employees may work full-time hours for up to nine months without being eligible for benefits. However, after working full-time consistently for nine months, the employee is considered benefits eligible.

The bomb threat policy for MMTH was discussed in light of the two threats received within the previous month. Employees in this building had been given confusing and/or conflicting information on what procedure to follow for a bomb threat. The Staff Council felt that employee, student, and visitor safety should be the paramount concern and the Chair, James McCaslin, will author a memo to the President reiterating this concern and requesting that the policy be clarified and then widely published to the campus community.

A staff member contacted the Staff Council regarding the restriction on purchasing parking permits to the level previously purchased. The employee felt that this was punishing new employees by not allowing them free access to every level of parking, as well as restricting employees who wished to upgrade their parking location. At this time, the Parking and Transportation has not begun discussions of issuing parking permits to employees for the 2006-2007 academic year, but Patty Booth will address this issue with that committee when those discussions begin, and more information will be forthcoming.

It was noted that there has been a problem with bicycles being stolen on campus in the past. Registration of bicycles will be required for fall, 2006, to help the owners more easily recover bicycles that might be stolen in the future.

Now that the Winter Term is in session, the Staff Council discussed how this new term has affected employees and their jobs. It was mentioned that it is easier to park because fewer students and faculty are on campus. It was noted that some staff were required to work through the holiday break to prepare for the start of Winter Term, but they were recognized and compensated accordingly.

Performance appraisals for staff will be processed through a new format this year using e-signature forms. The appraisal form will be completed online, and no paper copies will be processed. Supervisors and staff appraised will both receive e-mail confirmation of the numeric score given on the performance appraisal for their records. Training for supervisors on the new format and on how to evaluate employees in an unbiased manner will be held this week.

A council member questioned the time line for the Designated Smoking policy implementation. It was noted that the appropriate funding information has now been communicated to Facilities Management, so signage and other needed materials can be purchased. A request will be made for an official time line and more information will be forthcoming.

It was noted that the W-2 forms will be issued by January 31, 2006. It was also noted that any salary increases as a result of the gender/ethnicity equity survey were to be applied as of January 1, 2006.

The next meeting will be held on February 8, 2006.

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The WKU Staff Council held a called meeting on Tuesday, January 31, 2006. Members present were: Patty Booth, LySandra Bowles, David Emerson, Jeff Jones, Pat Jordan, James McCaslin, Charles McCoy, Angela Robertson, Heather Stubblefield, and Lauri Warden. Member absent were: Timmy Givens, Barbara Johnston, Chester McNulty, Ann Potter, Tina Sneed, and Mike Thompson.

Bob Deane, WKU Chief of Police, and Captain Mike Wallace attended the meeting to discuss questions regarding the past MMTH bomb threat issues and clarify the WKU bomb threat policy. Chief Deane distributed some information and explained that while police are the primary fact finders in a bomb threat situation, assistance may be requested from people in the building to help make the facility safe as quickly as possible. Employees are not required to help in any search situation, but may do so voluntarily, if requested to do so by the police. He stated that buildings would not be evacuated unless certain criteria are present. However, employees are not restricted to the building during a bomb threat and may leave, if they fear for their personal safety.

Chief Deane indicated that the police would like to respond to all concerns and noted that guidelines are being developed to deal with unusual situations such as bomb threats, tornado, flood, etc. If anyone on campus has concerns, questions, or suggestions regarding the official policy for these types of emergencies, please contact a staff council member, and these communications will be forwarded to the police as a group for a comprehensive response.

James McCaslin provided further information and clarification related to the health insurance fund. During the January meeting, James shared that the funds were never budgeted, and therefore not really missing. He has since received additional information that indicates that money not being budgeted was only part of the problem. Transfers were made out of the health insurance account by a net amount of approximately \$513,000 without the knowledge or approval of the Benefits Committee. At this juncture, we must work from this point forward. The President has approved the Health Fund Exclusivity document which should protect the fund from any future transfers without the knowledge of the Benefits Committee. Moreover, Jim Cummings has been appointed by the President to the Budget Council, which will facilitate exemplary communication between the Budget Council and the Benefits Committee as the Committee makes recommendations for future plan years.

The next regular Staff Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 8.

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The WKU Staff Council held its February meeting on Wednesday, February 8, 2006. Members present were: Patty Booth, LySandra Bowles, David Emerson, Barbara Johnston, Jeff Jones, James McCaslin, Charles McCoy, Ann Potter, Angela Robertson, Tina Sneed, Heather Stubblefield, Mike Thompson, and Lauri Warden. Members absent were: Timmy Givens, Pat Jordan, and Chester McNulty.

Patty Booth gave an update on the upcoming Parking and Transportation meeting, where parking costs for the future and wait lists for upgrading parking passes will be discussed. Various influences such as benchmarks, external expenditures, state budget, and prices at other Kentucky universities were discussed by the Staff Council. Angela Robertson will substitute for Patty at this upcoming meeting.

James McCaslin gave an update on the questions raised regarding the Facilities Management Staff Evaluations and the response he has received from Tom Riley. Mr. Riley that he was "aware of concerns over the evaluation program that were expressed during my HRC meeting". He indicated that "In order to address all issues on a broader scale, the HRC and myself will conduct a post performance evaluation survey to determine the pluses and the minuses of the DFM evaluation process. We will review the findings and then begin discussions to address the issues. ...to ensure that the process is fair, consistent and meaningful." Mr. Riley wants to have all this finished before the appraisal period begins for the next year.

Questions regarding evaluation scores in general were raised by several Staff Council members. The influence of evaluator training on evaluation scores was discussed. It was noted that this year every appraisal item required a numeric response, rather than the "not applicable" that was previously available to evaluators, which may also have had an effect on the scores. Communication between the evaluator and the employee is essential, so both know job expectations and how those expectations will affect the evaluation score. It was noted that a mid-year review is available online, but are not mandatory to be completed. Training is available from Human Resources on how to use this form, and staff can request a mid-year review be completed for their position. The Staff Council requested that Human Resources notify staff, as well as supervisors, in July when mid-year reviews may be performed.

Designated Smoking Area signage is estimated to be installed by the end of May, 2006. Darren Henson, WKU Landscape Architect, is working with the Master Plan Committee, PDC, and an architectural firm to develop the wayfinding/signage plan for the campus. Darren will help ensure that the designated smoking area signage will meet the standards set for WKU.

The Bomb Threat Policy comments received from the WKU community were discussed. Several WKU faculty/staff who have some expertise in this type of threat indicated that WKU is following accepted procedures, and they have volunteered to give the police department information and the benefit of their expertise, if requested. These responses have been forwarded to the police department for their information. The liability to

employees who volunteer to help search their building was discussed. More information will be forthcoming.

James McCaslin gave an update on the issue of extended periods of employment for individuals holding part-time, temporary appointments. After meeting with Facilities Management officials to discuss the issue, Tony Glisson said that employing individuals in a part-time, temporary capacity is an important employment strategy; however, such appointments should not be extended for longer periods of time. The conclusion was that "Facilities will continue to use part-time, temporary employment...however, appointments will be limited to no more than 6 months. After a 6 month period of time, the intent is to terminate employment OR apply the process so that individuals convert to full-time positions."

Staff Council Elections are coming up soon. There will be 2 secretarial support, 3 facilities management, and 1 professional non-faculty positions available. Anyone interested in working on staff issues on the staff council is encouraged to run for election. The proposed timeline for the election will be as follows: Human Resources will announce election on March 8, Request for Nominations will go out on March 22, Close of nominations will be at the end of business on April 5, and the online election will be held on Thursday, April 20. A computer will be set up in Facilities Management for voting that day to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote.

The three-year term of the Staff Regent expires this year, so a Staff Regent Election will be held this year also. The Staff Regent is a member of Western Kentucky University's Board of Regents and performs an important role in representing non-faculty employees. All staff employees are encouraged to consider running for this important position. The proposed timeline for this election will be as follows: Announcement of Nominations on May 1, Nominations due on May 22, Candidate forum held on June 12, and online election on June 13, 2006.

The Staff Satisfaction Survey will be conducted again this year. This survey is an important tool to give staff employees a voice to the WKU Administration. Heather Stubblefield, Barbara Johnston, Jeff Jones, LySandra Bowles, and Ann Potter will revisit and update the previous survey. The Staff Council anticipates this being available to staff employees in late March or April, so results can be tabulated by June. Dr. Betsy Shoenfelt has again agreed to analyze and present the data from this survey.

Sheila Houchens, representative to the Centennial Committee, sent information to the Staff Council on upcoming Centennial events. All staff are encouraged to visit the Centennial Website at <http://www.wku.edu/centennial> for a calendar of events and more information and to participate in this exciting year of activities.

The Kentucky Museum is requesting that staff donate old photos of WKU life to be used during the Centennial year. If you have pictures from your student days or beyond, please consider contributing them. You may contact Sue Lynn McDaniel, University Archivist, for more information.

The Staff Council discussed attendance of Council members at regularly-scheduled Staff Council Meetings. The By-Laws state that: "An automatic vacancy occurs when an elected Staff Council representative fails to attend three consecutively scheduled regular meetings since effective representation cannot be attained." "Replacements when a vacancy occurs shall be filled by the runner up in the respective category of the most recent election. If not applicable, the seat shall be filled by the runner up from the at-large category in the most recent election." The Council voted unanimously to issue a letter of dismissal to a member who has been absent the prerequisite number of meetings and to invite the next eligible runner up to fill the vacancy. This position will be up for election again this spring.

The issue of mandatory safety training for Facilities Management staff was discussed. The question of how attendance at this training would affect employees who might have a Workers' Compensation claim in the future was discussed.

The next regular meeting of the Staff Council will be held on March 1, 2006.

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The WKU Staff Council held its March meeting on Wednesday, March 1, 2006. Members present were: LySandra Bowles, David Emerson, Barbara Johnston, Jeff Jones, Pat Jordan, James McCaslin, Chester McNulty, Ann Potter, Angela Robertson, Darrell Saalwaechter, Heather Stubblefield, and Lauri Warden. Absent were: Patty Booth, Charles McCoy, Tina Sneed, and Mike Thompson.

James McCaslin introduced the new Staff Council member, Darrell Saalwaechter, and welcomed him to the group. Darrell will fill this position through the June meeting.

A response from Tony Glisson to the Staff Council inquiry regarding the option to use "Not Applicable" as a response on the staff performance evaluations was read to the Council, which indicated that the current form was designed with input from a Staff Council subcommittee, and a change to the form so soon would not be beneficial. After discussion, the members agreed to not request a change be made at this time.

The Staff Council has been notified by Human Resources that at the request of the Council, a notice will be sent out as a staff-all e-mail at the appropriate time this summer, so all employees will be aware that they have the opportunity to request a mid-year review of their work performance.

Lauri Warden and Heather Stubblefield gave an update on requests for mentors by new staff employees to the Mentoring Committee. It was explained that several times information on the Bowling Green community or on networking on campus has been requested in addition to regular mentoring. Council members pointed out that the Staff Leadership Institute is a good way for employees to gain training and meet people from all across campus. Other volunteer activities, such as assisting with the graduation ceremonies, give the same opportunity.

A request for the Staff Council to consider proposing a change to the current policy of vacation accrual for rehired employees was presented. After discussion of the various costs, benefits, and issues, the Council members chose not to pursue action on this request.

Ann Potter asked for an update on the part-time employees' benefits proposal. James McCaslin reported that he suspected the proposal would be considered during upcoming budget deliberations.

The Staff Council election of new representatives will be held online on April 20, and the Staff Regent Election will be held online on June 13. A computer station will be manned by council members from 4:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on both of these dates in Facilities Management for those who do not have other access to computers. All WKU staff employees are encouraged to run for these positions and to vote in both of these elections.

An updated form for the Staff Satisfaction Survey was presented by Heather Stubblefield and Jeff Jones. Proposed new questions had been reviewed by Dr. Betsy Shoenfelt, who gave the council feedback on them. After discussion of the survey as a whole, it was

announced that the form would be finalized and distributed within the next two weeks. The Council requests that completed forms be returned no later than March 31. The data will be analyzed by Dr. Shoenfelt and graduate students under her supervision, and results are expected to be received by early summer.

The ORP white paper and meeting on March 2 was discussed. Representatives from the Staff Council will attend and report back to the Council at the next meeting.

Jeff Jones reported that the Staff Council website had been updated recently.

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The WKU Staff Council held its April meeting on Wednesday, April 5, 2006. Members present were: LySandra Bowles, David Emerson, Barbara Johnston, Jeff Jones, Pat Jordan, James McCaslin, Charles McCoy, Ann Potter, Angela Robertson, Tina Sneed, Heather Stubblefield, Mike Thompson, and Lauri Warden. Members absent were: Patty Booth, Chester McNulty, and Darrell Saalwaechter.

The Tuition Benefit/Discount for Dependents policy was discussed. This year, after implementing the new policy for the first time, it was discovered that less money was available to give scholarships to students in general because a few students with full-ride scholarships had this benefit applied to them, and received a substantial residual check as a result. After much discussion, it was decided that the intent of the Staff Council was not to reduce the number of scholarships available to deserving students, but to ensure that all WKU employees received their benefits. The Council will discuss the matter further at the next meeting.

The possibility of beginning an online, centralized FAQ page to help new staff acclimate to the WKU campus was discussed. The issues of ever-changing information, scope of the information offered, and limited staff to update the page were brought up by Council members. It was determined that the Staff Council would not be able to take on this large-scale project. The Staff Council sponsors a Staff Mentoring committee which is available for newly-hired staff to contact with questions. A link to contact the committee will be placed on the Staff Council webpage for the convenience of those wanting to take advantage of this service.

An update on the Parking Committee's activities was given by James McCaslin in Patty Booth's absence. The Staff Council held a called meeting on March 13 to review various parking proposals and give Patty feedback before a vote was taken by the Parking Committee on which proposal to send forward. At this time, no proposal has been approved by the administration and the Parking Committee continues to meet and work on a plan for permit rates for 2006/2007.

Heather Stubblefield gave an update on the Staff Satisfaction Survey results. The data should be ready to give to Dr. Shoenfelt for analysis within the next week.

Laws concerning exempt status employees were discussed. It was agreed that University employees, even though exempt, are bound by state and federal labor laws.

The Council held a discussion of the practice of hiring Building Service Attendants for six months as temporary, full-time employees without benefits.

Employee raises have been recommended to be 3% on average. The Staff Council discussed raise issues and gave Pat Jordan, Staff Regent, feedback on issues that will be coming up at the next Board of Regents meeting.

The Staff Council website has been updated using the new CMS software. It was noted that the website is fully ADA compliant.

The next meeting of the Staff Council will be on Wednesday, May 3.

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The WKU Staff Council held its May meeting on Wednesday, May 3 in DUC 226. Members present were: Patty Booth, David Emerson, Barbara Johnston, Jeff Jones, Pat Jordan, James McCaslin, Charles McCoy, Chester McNulty, Ann Potter, Angela Robertson, Darrell Saalwaechter, Tina Sneed, Heather Stubblefield, and Lauri Warden. Members absent were: LySandra Bowles and Mike Thompson.

The Staff Council (SC) discussed changes in the Staff Regent Guidelines that have been made since last election. It was determined that no absentee ballots will be used as we are now using online voting, which allows voters access from any computer worldwide. Voting for Staff Regent will be held online on Tuesday June 13. **ALL STAFF EMPLOYEES ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO VOTE FOR THIS IMPORTANT POSITION.** Computers will be available for voting purposes in Facilities Management to any employee without computer access, and will be manned by SC representatives to assist with any computer issues that may arise.

The forum for the staff to get information from the candidates for Staff Regent will be held on Monday, June 12 at 9:00 a.m. in MMTH Auditorium. **ALL STAFF EMPLOYEES ARE URGED TO ATEND.** The following guidelines will be used during the forum:

#### **STAFF REGENT ELECTION FORUM GUIDELINES**

- Introduction of candidates by the mediator.
- The candidates will each be given five minutes to introduce themselves and make an opening presentation. The order of these presentations will be determined by a number draw.
- After the opening presentations the floor will be opened for questions. Each candidate will have the opportunity to respond to each question. The order will continue sequentially in the order in which the presentations were made. Each candidate will have a maximum of one minute to answer the question, with a warning given at 45 seconds by a timekeeper.
- No rebuttals or interjections by candidates will be allowed.
- Each candidate will have three minutes to make his/her closing statement. The sequential order continues.
- NOTE: The mediator has authority over the conduct of the forum. Each candidate is expected to act in a professional manner.

The June SC retreat at the Glasgow campus was discussed. Dr. Betsy Shoenfelt will present the results of the Staff Survey at that time. Mr. Tony Glisson and Dr. Gene Tice will be attending a portion of the retreat also. Photos of the 2006-2007 Staff Council members will be taken at the retreat to be posted on the website, so staff will be able to recognize their representatives more easily.

Pat Jordan distributed information regarding the definition of an ombudsman, which include: receiving and investigating complaints, reports on findings and helps achieve just and equitable settlements; catalyst for institutional reform; institutional

troubleshooter working to prevent problems for arising; and confidential, neutral, conflict-resolver. She indicated that the University Senate is moving forward with a proposal to create a faculty ombudsman position and proposed that the Staff Council look into the possibility of having a staff ombudsman as well. The council decided to do some fact finding and discuss this proposal more fully at the retreat with the new council members.

Dr. Tice made a request of SC Chair, James McCaslin, that he be invited to more staff council meetings. James encouraged the incoming Staff Council to invite all the Vice Presidents to meetings throughout the year, as open communication between administration and staff is very valuable.

James McCaslin read a report from Elizabeth Paris, SC representative to the Budget Council, which states that the Part-Time Staff Employee Tuition Waiver has been reinstated in the upcoming budget.

Chester McNulty brought up the issue of staff who thought they were being hired on as full-time, permanent staff, who are in actuality being hired as temporary staff without benefits for several months. There is a great deal of confusion and possibly some misunderstanding of the current policy. Several SC members have been approached by staff who have been hired in this manner and have indicated that this practice is misleading, especially for jobs at the lower end of the pay scale. The SC requested that a clearly-defined policy be formed, so that incoming staff employees will know upfront what type of position they are being offered and if benefits are available immediately or at some predetermined future date.

Bursar Belinda Higginbotham spoke to the members regarding the Dependent Tuition Waiver Benefit. She indicated that it was possible in Banner for the Employee Dependent Tuition Waiver to be applied to the student's tuition bill first, with other WKU tuition scholarships being applied after that up to the amount of actual tuition. This would allow each employee to receive their benefit, but also disburse the limited amount of scholarship funds to the most eligible students as possible. Updating of this policy is in process and the policy will be released from Human Resources soon.

Tony Glisson offered a detailed explanation concerning the life insurance commission's refund issue as recently communicated to affected employees. After discussion of the facts and various factors that had to be considered, the Staff Council agreed that a fair and equitable solution was applied in implementing a one month "premium holiday" for optional life, spousal life, dependent life premium (May payrolls).

Tony Glisson asked the SC for their input regarding the Employee Recognition program at WKU, both at retirement and throughout the employee's term at WKU. Information about when a person would be come eligible for retirement was disbursed and discussed. Ann Potter questioned if part-time employees would be included in this recognition

program with the result that eligible part-time employees will be included. The SC members unanimously endorsed an employee recognition program at WKU.

Patty Booth gave a Parking and Transportation update. She reported that attendance was approximately 260 people at the forums. After considering input from the forums, a parking proposal was sent from the Parking and Transportation committee to the Administrative Council, but no decision had been made as of that day.

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The WKU Staff Council held its June Retreat meeting on Wednesday, June 7, 2006, at the Glasgow Campus. Members present were: Patty Booth, LySandra Bowles, David Emerson, Barbara Johnston, Jeff Jones, Pat Jordan, James McCaslin, Charles McCoy, Chester McNulty, Ann Potter, Angela Robertson, Darrell Saalwaechter, Tina Sneed, Heather Stubblefield, and Lauri Warden. Mike Thompson was absent. New staff council members present were: Larry Hardin, Trish Jagers, Todd Misener, and Stephanie Wimsatt.

Introductions were made of each staff council member present.

James McCaslin gave an overview of the Staff Council (SC) and what the role of the SC is in the university. He indicated that it does not mediate or negotiate individual problems in the workplace, but that the purpose is to facilitate and assist staff in finding solutions to issues that affect staff as groups or a whole. The Staff Council makes policy recommendations to the President of the university and is the voice for all 1200 staff employees.

Discussion of various university and SC committees and needed replacements for outgoing council members was held. Updates for the website were also discussed.

Accomplishments of the 2005-2006 Staff Council were determined to be: part-time staff tuition waiver reinstated, dependent tuition waiver policy reinstated, computers for Facilities Management use, Staff Satisfaction Survey, most well-attended Fall Break Brunch, and funding for designated smoking area implementation.

Areas for future SC consideration/follow up are: designated smoking area signage, Facilities Management hiring practices, staff ombudsmen position, 18-hour limit on staff tuition waivers.

Pat Jordan distributed a proposal for a staff Ombuds person, and explained what this type of position would accomplish. Barbara Johnston proposed that a committee be formed to work with Tony Glisson to begin this task. No further action was taken at this time.

Dr. Betsy Shoenfelt, along with graduate students, Joe Dunn and Ross Love, presented the results from the 2006 Staff Satisfaction Survey. Completed surveys were received from 606 staff members, which was up from last year's amount of 565. The most important issue to the staff again this year was the 2-week Christmas break. After the presentation, Dr. Shoenfelt questioned the SC stating that now we have two year's worth of data, what are we going to do with it? She gave suggestions on how to design future surveys to gain more in depth information on important topics from the survey. The new council will be reviewing the data and setting goals based on the results.

Elections for SC officers were facilitated by James McCaslin. Jeff Jones was nominated and unanimously elected for Webmaster; Angela Robertson was nominated and unanimously elected as Chair; and, Trish Jagers and Barbara Johnston were nominated

for Secretary/Treasurer. Trish declined the nomination, and Barbara was unanimously elected as Secretary/Treasurer.

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