

Staff Council Report to the Chancellor of Activities & Concerns for 2008-2009

To start the 2008-09 academic year, council was presented with the following list from the previous year's minutes and agendas.

Agenda items:

- Staff training
- Educational leave and release time
- Staff handbook
- HR redesign
- Step Increases/Staff Compensation Task Force
- Non-retention policy
- Updating of Constitution and By-laws

Issues to watch:

- Mediation program
- Job Family reclassification
- Childcare
- Healthcare costs

Issues/actions of interest:

- Political Action Committee
- Online elections
- Master calendar
- Fair process

Over the course of the academic year, these were our activities and successes:

Activities:

- Staff training – Council effectively communicated to Chancellor Rogers the value of and support for training. He financially supported a three year contract with SkillSoft, an online training application and directed the creation of UAF's Supervisor Training Program.
- Educational leave and release time – We provided input on proposed changes to this policy at the statewide level. However with the rapid decline in funds at statewide due to the economy, the policy revisions were tabled.
- Staff handbook – This was another issue that Chancellor Rogers expressed support for. He asked the interim and incoming directors of Human Resources to meet with us to discuss it. After meeting with both of them we have a commitment to work with us to create a staff resources webpage.

- HR redesign – The project was reviewed in light of a new chancellor and declining budget at statewide. The push to restructure HR into statewide has stopped but there are still plans to reorganize and review procedures within UAF HR.
- Step Increases/Staff Compensation Task Force – Council's president served on the task force, regularly reported on their activities and sought input from representatives.
- Non-retention policy – Council's president carried feedback and concerns to Chancellor Rogers, Staff Alliance and System Governance Council.
- Updating of Constitution and By-laws – EMR has updated both of these documents and are in the process of submitting each for first and second readings.
- Mediation program – Council's president has made implementing the mediation program a priority for the Chancellor's Diversity Action Committee.
- Childcare – Council's only action on this issue was to push for staff representation on the Family Friendly Task Force. We were not successful but the task force has made little progress.
- Healthcare costs – There have been discussions in Council about how premiums are being spent and we have representation on the Staff Healthcare Committee. There will be greater action on this issue given the recent increases in premiums and expectations of increasing costs.
- Political Action Committee – Council's president has met with the Faculty Affairs committee on partnering to form a group similar to UAA's Faculty and Staff Association. The intent is to more effectively advocate for UAF's portion of the university's budget.
- Online elections – This has been on hold pending decisions on representation in Staff Council.
- Master calendar – There has been no activity on this issue.
- Fair process – While efforts to create a mediation program have been unsuccessful, progress on a staff handbook and discussions regarding non-retention should help in this area.

Successes:

- Staff training – Council's president was actively involved in the creation of the Supervisor Training Program.
- Because of our continued interest in the HR redesign project, Council's president was invited to serve on the hiring committee for the HR director.
- Staff handbook – we have received a commitment from the HR Director to work with us to create a staff resources webpage.
- Staff Appreciation Day – On May 11 we will host the first all day event appreciating staff at UAF.

In the UAF 2010 Strategic Plan, **Strategic Pathway VI - Faculty and Staff Development** states: The university is dedicated to recruiting, developing, retaining and recognition of a diverse faculty and staff who will carry out our mission of excellence in teaching, research and service.

Goals:

- Increase the representation and retention of women and minorities in staff and faculty positions
- Increase recognition of staff and faculty excellence
- Increase staff development activities
- Increase assistance to new faculty in areas such as establishing research programs and pedagogy
- Improve measures for evaluating faculty and staff performance

Remaining and Recent Concerns:

We believe the concerns listed below will define the university's success in meeting the goals stated above.

- Staff handbook – While we have a commitment from HR to work with us on providing staff resources, this concern must stay at the top of our priority list until we have a product available for the benefit of all staff.
- Step Increases – The suspension of step increases will continue for FY10. While the grid adjustment covers most compensation increases, it is not a long-term solution. It is very important to watch the activities of the Staff Compensation Task Force and provide input from there all the way up to the Regents if necessary.
- Non-retention – this became an issue because the Board of Regents policy on non-retention is not being followed. The treatment of staff in non-retention and co-workers as an after-effect has not been recognized by upper administration. Chancellor Rogers has said he agrees with our concerns but we need to continue to be aware of how non-retention is being used on our campus.
- Mediation program – The implementation of this program or a variation of it is necessary for fair and consistent treatment of staff and would demonstrate the administration's interest in retaining staff.
- Childcare – The dearth of childcare on or near the UAF campus is a serious concern for faculty, staff and students. Council is very disappointed that no action has been taken by administration to improve the situation this academic year. However, we do recognize the impact of the sudden decline in the stock market on the university's available funds.
- Political Action Committee – The size of the budget pie for the University of Alaska is not going to increase, at least not substantially over the next few years. That reality combined with the legislature's decision to divide our appropriation into individual appropriations makes organizing this committee even more important for UAF.

- Online elections – Online elections will provide greater efficiency and participation in council's elections. Once the decision is made on defining representation this effort should move forward quickly.
- Job Family Reclassification – A market analysis was to be done at the completion of this project. Funding apparently was an issue. However, it has been described as one of the foundation pieces in the discussions of the Staff Compensation Task Force.
- Healthcare costs – Council must watch this and seek regular reports from the Director of Benefits and representatives on the Statewide Staff Health Care Committee. Decisions are going to be made over the next couple of years that will change the extent of our healthcare coverage and the cost of it significantly in light of increasing costs.

Juella Sparks, President

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