

RIT STAFF COUNCIL

Thursday, February 10, 2011
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
1829 Room, SAU

APPROVED MINUTES

PRESENT: Bayerl, Carlino, Carroll, DeLorme, Fragale, Henen, Johnson, Lana, Marlowe, McKee, McKeown, Ntheketha, Ott, Picioli, Pollock, Rodriguez-Elliott, Saxe, Schleyer, St. Jean, Tydings, Watrous, Zachmeyer, McCloskey (Parliamentarian)

ABSENT: Fiorucci, McDonald, Reafler

EXCUSED: Bauroth, Dana, Dinolfo, Dwyer, Ester, Fagenbaum, Goldberg, Kiely, Lepkowski, Phillips, Rogers, Rosenberg, Sullivan

GUEST: Lee Twyman, Faculty/Staff/Student Ombudsperson

MEETING called to order by M. Carroll at 2:00 p.m.

MINUTES of 1/27/11 approved.

THE OMBUDS OFFICE – NEVER THE WRONG PLACE TO GO

RSC welcomed Lee Twyman, Faculty/Staff/Student Ombudsperson. Lee thanked RSC members for the opportunity to update them on her office's activities. She began with a brief reminder that the Ombuds office is an independent office where faculty, staff, students and parents can seek help with any kind of RIT-related difficulty they may be facing. Her office will help them explore options and point out and explain RIT policies that might be helpful, while remaining neutral and impartial. Lee stressed that the Ombuds office maintains strict confidentiality. If a question arises that someone else might be able to help with, she can go to them with a hypothetical question thereby protecting the identity of those involved. The Ombuds office is located in room 1110 SAU, across from the SAU cafeteria. There is a less public entrance next to the ATM machine across from Artesano Bakery, and private waiting and meeting areas to maintain confidentiality.

Q – Suppose someone comes to you and after discussion and consideration, decides not to pursue the issue. Will that information stay within the Ombuds office?

A – **Absolutely.** The person who comes in with a concern is always in control, deciding if and when to take a next step. Because the Ombuds office is not an “office of notice,” there is no requirement to report issues to an RIT authority. This differs from other places one might go, such as Human Resources. In some cases, HR would be required to act upon information discussed with them whether the person wants to or not.

Lee went on to say that of the 441 cases her office handled during the 2008/2009 academic year:

- 57 % were initiated by students
- 13% were initiated by parents
- 14% were initiated by staff
- 7% were initiated by faculty
- 8% were initiated by administrators

She asked for any feedback RSC members may have heard about the Ombuds office.

Comment – A colleague said the recommendations you discussed with them were good, but they didn't work – nothing changed. They wondered where to turn next.

A – Please tell them to come back to the Ombuds office. We don't want things to remain unresolved. We can follow up and discuss other avenues they might want to pursue.

Q – Last year, HR conducted a 6-month pilot of a “Staff Advocate” position. Why couldn't your office serve in that role?

A – The Ombuds office does not advocate for anyone. Our focus is ensuring a fair process. We can accompany a person to their manager to ensure fairness in the process used to address a situation, but would not act as an advocate for them during such a meeting.

Q – I have a concern about awarding equal salary increases in a department regardless of performance appraisals. That doesn't seem like a fair process.

A – Feel free to bring that concern to me. The Ombuds office is always a good first place to go; we can help look into the situation to get the facts, and suggest what you might do next.

Q – If I came to you, what could I expect you to do?

A – I would begin by helping get complete information about a situation. If appropriate, I could channel concerns to those in a position to make changes, without revealing who came to me originally. If there is no resolution, I can channel it to someone higher up the chain. That's why it's important to return if the first steps fail. I can't help further until I know further help is needed. I don't have the authority to make changes, but I can refer problems to those who do. For instance, the students were very upset about a reduction in bus service. I was able to go to Dr. Watters to inform him of their concern, which he addressed to the students' satisfaction.

Q – What is your success rate?

A – I can't really tell you, because some people don't come back and tell me the outcome.

RSC invited Lee to submit a post for the Staff Council blog to help people understand what the Ombuds office has to offer.

CHAIR'S REPORT

M. Carroll read the report submitted by Chair B. Kiely:

- The Budget hearings are underway and will continue through March 10.
- Deborah Biedenkopf of Rivers Run contacted me and asked that I pass on to Staff this information about Rivers Run: Rivers Run is an active adult community for residents age 55+ located on 38-acres beside the Genesee River adjacent to RIT's Racquet Club housing. Located in a natural setting but only minutes from the widest range of conveniences, Rivers Run offers cottage homes for sale and apartments for lease. It offers its community members the opportunity to fully integrate into the academic & social life of RIT; Rivers Run community members may attend lectures, have use of the campus facilities and participate in campus life and events.
- Executive committee met with Dr. Haefner last week and discussed a number of topics, including:
 - **2012/2013 Calendar:** Dr. Haefner told EC that the Academic Senate vote was evenly split (13 – 14). He said the short turnaround between the summer quarter and the first *semester* in the fall is a great concern to some, and noted it could have a great impact on staff. We'll be discussing this in more depth later in this meeting.
 - **Budget Cycle:** Dr. Haefner reported that the pool of available funds is smaller this year (~\$1M) because some funds have already been earmarked for SIS, calendar conversion, and salary increments. Therefore, only critical requests can/will be funded. Tuition will increase 4-4.5%.

- **Salary Increment:** Salary increment levels are being discussed now. When asked, Dr. Haefner said that whatever the final pool turns out to be, the intent is that it be awarded based on merit, not across-the-board.
- **Conversion:** EC explained that exempt staff are working many evenings and weekends on the calendar conversion and SIS. They were told at the outset that there would be compensation for added workload, and are asking about the process to access that extra compensation. Dr. Haefner replied that there is money set aside for faculty and staff, but he was not aware of the arrangements for dispersing it. He said he would check with Dr. Naveda, Semester Conversion Project Director, and get back to us.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Communication – M. Johnson

- Today's blog announcement included an attached mid-year update, which you might want to share with your constituents.
- Topics planned for future blog posts include SLC information and the future direction of "Better Me" – please suggest topics or submit posts any time
 - F&A is offering its people information for financial wellness. Perhaps some of the information could be posted to reach a wider audience.
- The Staff Recognition Award window display and Spirit Wear initiatives are on hold pending funding decisions

Elections – P. Meyers

- The committee is reviewing voting block ratios in preparation for the upcoming general elections in blocks 1, 3 and 5.

Events – J. Ott

- Committee continues to plan the Staff Recognition Day & Community Picnic.

Institute Issues & Policies – B. St. Jean

- Relayed winter parking concerns raised at the last RSC meeting to our Parking Advisory Group reps. PATS is developing educational information regarding parking and transportation.

Ad-hoc Committee for Staff in Academic Units – S. Bayerl, J. Ntheketha

- Began discussing the off-boarding concerns raised at the last RSC meeting. Our next step is fact-finding to understand if/how these issues are affecting staff outside of Academic Affairs.
 - Ombuds Lee Twyman encouraged the committee to enlist her help should they feel she could be of assistance in this matter.

Ad-hoc Hot Topics – J. Lana

- No report

UPDATE – AVP HR SEARCH

J. McKee, RSC's appointee to the search committee for the Assistant Vice President of Human Resources, reported that the committee has identified 3 finalists. They will be on campus in March for a day of interviews, including with the chairs and vice chairs of the governance groups.

Q – Why was the decision made to have only the 2 people from each governance group meet with the candidates?

A – I believe it is in an effort to protect the privacy of the candidates, who may not have revealed to their current employer the fact that they are pursuing another position.

M. Carroll encouraged all RSC members to forward to her and B. Kiely issues and questions they would like the candidates to address.

2012/2013 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

There were two options proposed for the 2012/2013 calendar:

- Option A (“Traditional”) is the standard calendar, including:
 - September 3 Labor Day start
 - one week break between Fall & Winter quarters;
 - three weeks of classes before holiday break
 - three week long holiday break for students (Dec 16 – Jan 6)
 - Commencement on Memorial Day weekend
 - August 12 – 17 Final exams
 - three days between the end of summer quarter and Fall orientation
 - eight days between the end of summer quarter and the beginning of RIT’s first Fall Semester.
- Option B (“Non-traditional”) differs slightly but significantly in that it calls for:
 - September 3 Labor Day start
 - one week break between Fall & Winter quarters;
 - **four** weeks of classes before holiday break
 - **two** week break for students (Dec 23 – Jan 6)
 - Commencement **the week before** Memorial Day weekend
 - August **6 - 10** Final exams
 - **ten** days between the end of summer quarter and Fall orientation
 - **fifteen** days between the end of summer quarter and the beginning of RIT’s first Fall Semester.

Motions:

Staff Council supports 2012/2013calendar proposal A

Staff Council supports 2012/2013calendar proposal B

Discussion:

- Student Government will vote tomorrow; straw polls have been divided
- As with Option A, next year’s calendar includes a 3-week holiday break for students
- Option A makes for a shorter turn-around between summer and fall, but it’s only for one year. What’s more important is how students are affected.
- Students have concerns with Option A’s short break. Plans are underway to offer additional courses in the summer of 2013 (20124) to enable students’ transition by completing courses under quarters instead of semesters. That means more students may be negatively impacted by the short break, especially Orientation and Residence Hall staff who need training during that time. Summer co-ops often start and end later than the quarter. Option B would offer more time to wrap up courses, co-ops, and/or training.
- NTID’s Summer Vestibule program would not fit into Option A.
- Option B has classes right up until December 23rd, making travel – especially long-distance travel – more difficult for students.
- I teach classes, and I feel the 4 weeks before break is better for teaching.
- I polled my college and the overwhelming preference is for the option B for these reasons:
 - In option A, the time between the end of summer 20124 and the start of 2013 Fall is inadequate for suspensions and probations and orientation.

- Option A could lead to more Ds, Ws, Fs because students would be off for too long in the middle of the quarter – this is already an issue with a two week break; three weeks would just make it worse.
- Many faculty give exams in week four and it makes sense to have those exams before the holiday break rather than coming back after a long break and taking exams, especially for those already struggling.
- For faculty who teach in the summer and have children in elementary and/or high school, option A offers no time for a family vacation.
- With option B, commencement is not on Memorial Day weekend, allowing those who work it to enjoy the rare three day weekend.

Vote:

Staff Council supports 2012/2013calendar proposal A – 3 votes in favor

Staff Council supports 2012/2013calendar proposal B – 17 votes in favor

OLD / NEW BUSINESS

1. A constituent brought this situation to my attention: The method used to accrue vacation – specifically, beginning accrual only on July 1st or January 1st – affects the number of vacation days actually received in years of transition to a higher vacation level. In the transition year this can result in as many as 2.5 days fewer (or more) than policy directs. My colleague believes the practice should be changed to calculate accrual from the date of hire so that everyone receives the correct vacation time.
 - This matter was referred to the Institute Issues and Policies Committee for further study.
2. Where does the Career Ladder project currently stand?

A – EC is scheduled to meet with Patty Spinelli next week; we'll ask for an update from her and get back to you.

Comment – Career ladders for FMS custodial staff were implemented in January.
3. A colleague retired and, in the course of arranging health care coverage, was told she is considered “out of area”, although she lives in the same place she did while working here. This came as a last-minute surprise to her. The only options left provide lesser coverage at higher cost, adding unplanned expenditures to a limited budget. “Out of area” needs to be defined and stated up front so that people can plan accordingly.

MEETING adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret S. Meyers

Margaret S. Meyers
Staff Council Coordinator