

OFFICE STAFF EMPLOYEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
12/17/08 MINUTES

Present: Amy Barnes, Tracey Mason, Cathy McElhannon, Loretta Persinger, Nellie Rice, Wendy Richards, Cree Sherrill, Mary Katherine Snead

I. Grievance Procedure.

Sidney Evans, Dean of Student Services for the Law School, and Rob Straughn, Associate Dean of the Williams School, met with the committee and reviewed the Grievance Committee recommendations, including the new procedures and the ombuds program. The complete report of the committee and their recommendations are available here:

<http://www.wlu.edu/documents/president/DesignatedOfficerReport.pdf>

Q) What is the timeline for implementation of the new Grievance procedure?

A) The DPA Coordinator will need to be appointed and other DPAs selected and trained before concerns can be brought using this grievance procedure (until then the current procedure remains in effect). It is the hope of the committee that this can all be done relatively early in the winter term and the process open to the community shortly thereafter. The community will be notified when the new process is effective.

Q) What about the ombuds position? Will the ombuds be a current employee?

A) The search has begun, advertisements have been placed and contacts have been made. The ombuds will likely be a part time contract position, held by someone without current WLU ties. The recommendation is that it be an impartial person and someone with dispute resolution experience.

Q) Why is the ombuds a two year pilot program?

A) It is the hope of the committee that, at that time, other channels (including HR) will be effectively addressing concerns and the need for an ombuds will be less. The need for an ombuds will therefore be reevaluated at that time.

Q) Would the ombuds be located on campus?

A) Yes. We are attempting to locate it in an area that will allow for confidentiality.

Q) What is average number of complaints per year?

A) At this point, there are about 3-4 each year, however, there may be some that currently go unreported. The committee hopes that these changes to the procedures will bring unreported concerns forward to be addressed.

Amy clarified that this policy is only for illegal discrimination/harassment only- i.e., based on a protected class. However, other instances of unfair treatment or inappropriate behavior should be addressed through HR, the ombuds, university mediation, etc. HR is looking at the possibility of having trained mediators on campus that could resolve informal disputes. That program would run out of HR. We would be looking for people in the community who would be interested.

Q) How will DPAs be chosen?

A) There will be opportunities for staff to nominate people to serve as DPAs - they should be people that staff normally feel comfortable confiding in. We need to ensure that we have representation from different areas on campus and different constituencies.

Q) Will the ombuds only deal with informal resolutions?

A) Yes. The ombuds will likely help employees understand their options and may refer them to whatever formal or informal channels make sense in that situation.

Q) How will this information be communicated to the community?

A) There will be meetings with Facilities and Dining Services employees and also open sessions in January/February to explain the process to the campus community. EAC members suggested having sessions for individual work groups and to also have sessions without supervisors.

Q) Will sanctions be reported to the community?

A) Summary statistics will be available at the end of the year. Sanctions will remain confidential to protect the privacy of those involved. This is the standard for other schools with similar processes.

Q) Are there guidelines regarding sanctions?

A) Not at this time. That will be part of the training of the IROs. There are very many factors to consider including the severity of the infraction, recurrence, etc.

Q) How would criminal complaints be handled?

A) We would still follow our internal process in this case. The standard of proof is different and our internal process would likely happen more quickly than the court process.

#### Miscellaneous Topics

HR is sponsoring a smoking cessation program. Kent Massey, an attorney and counselor in town will lead the three session program. WLU will subsidize half of the \$100 fee for those who attend all the sessions. There are a minimum of four, maximum of eight spots.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Katherine Snead, Human Resources.