

OFFICE STAFF EMPLOYEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
11/21/08 MINUTES

Present: Dymph Alexander, Amy Barnes, Sue Coffey, Tracey Mason, Ed Mays, Loretta Persinger, Nellie Rice, Wendy Richards, Martha Rowsley, Cree Sherrill, Mary Katherine Snead, Denise Watts.

Guest: Steve McAllister

1. EAC Charge and Membership Rotation.

The committee continued the discussion begun last month about membership rotation. Since there are 10 active members of the committee, we will need to have five members whose terms will be set to end in June, 2009. In this way, committee members will have staggered terms with ½ rotating off every other year.

The current committee members have all been in place since 2004, therefore length of service could not be used to determine who would rotate off. A few members volunteered to rotate off:

- Dymph Alexander
- Cathy McElhannon (was not present but volunteered by email to Amy)
- Wendy Richards
- Nellie Rice
- Martha Rowsey

There will be discussion at a later meeting about possible representatives to rotate onto the committee in June. Everyone agrees it is important to have representation from across campus, as well as a mix of divisions, demographics, service, etc.

There was continued discussion about the role and charge of the committee. Committee members said that the role has not been clear and has changed over time. Amy said that the charge that was printed in the minutes from the last meeting will be the official charge and added that she hopes the charge will help to clarify both to committee members and to the community that the committees are advisory in nature (i.e., they are not decision making bodies).

Q) What does 'may make recommendations for consideration by the appropriate administrative unit of campus' mean? Who decides which unit is the 'appropriate administrative unit' to take feedback to?

A) Amy explained that it is her responsibility to ensure that the feedback goes to the right committee or individual. That could include the benefits committee, the president/president's council or the director of a department (depending on the issue).

2. Salary Benchmark Data.

As requested at the last meeting, Amy and Steve McAllister shared salary data showing where certain office staff positions are relative to market (the graphs that Amy and Steve shared with the group are attached as an appendix to these minutes). Amy explained that this data came from a survey conducted by Mercer for Colgate University that included many of the top 25 liberal arts colleges. This is a departure from earlier practice when W&L benchmarked staff salaries to local salaries only.

A few notes about the data:

- Several positions with only one incumbent were excluded from the report to protect the confidentiality of those individual salaries.

- survey data for administrative assistants were collected separately for academic departments vs. administrative departments

Q) How is cost of living factored in? Is the cost of living in these areas comparable to Lexington?

A) Amy said that there were no cost of living adjustments made to the data. Some of our peer schools are in areas that are more expensive, some are less. Steve added that there really is no good way to assess cost of living differences for Lexington and some of the areas where other peer schools are located.

Q) Wendy and Loretta are classified as administrative assistants but are actually library staff. How are these situations handled?

A) Amy explained that when we did the comparisons against the survey data, we compared our library positions against the survey library positions.

Q) Does the salary data look at benefits?

A) This particular survey looks only at direct compensation. She added that the benefits committee looks at peer information when they make recommendations for benefit plan changes. For example, we know that W&L's contribution to health insurance and retirement is lower than peers. W&L has made a commitment to increase the employer contribution to both of those programs.

Steve said that salaries and benefits make up about 65% of W&L's operating budget. As W&L works to increase salaries, this will also mean increased spending for benefits (example – retirement contributions which are based on salary also increase).

Q) How will the economy affect the work/life initiative? How much of the \$6.6 million estimated for the work/life initiative will go to staff salaries?

A) Steve explained that the operating budget comes from tuition/fees, endowments and gifts. With endowments down, there is certainly an affect on the operating budget. W&L is in a slightly better position than some of our peers due to a reserve that the Board established in the event of an unanticipated need such as this. Of the \$6.6 million earmarked for work/life, \$1.5M will go to staff salaries. W&L is continuing the commitment to improving staff salaries in spite of the downturn in the economy. This is an indication of how important staff salaries are to the administration.

Q) The bookstore clerks are the only group that are above the median. Why is that?

A) There could be several reasons for this. First, the staff of the University Store are long service employees so one might expect their salaries to be higher if the staff at other institutions in the survey haven't been in their jobs as long. More importantly, our staff may have more responsibility than the clerks in the survey (for example they also having buying responsibilities) so the positions may not be comparable. Amy clarified that in the survey, 'bookstore clerk' is really an entry level position. Amy added that more work needs to be done to ensure that we are correctly matching titles/positions.

Q) Will there be some changes in job descriptions and titles? Some of us are doing very different things than what we were hired for and have never received a raise.

A) Mercer is looking at the PIQs - at what the appropriate title, job description and compensation should be. This will make comparisons to peer schools easier and more accurate. However, most jobs do change and grow from year to year; that does not necessarily mean that the salary would change just because the position changes. So, in some cases, there will be adjustments but not necessarily in all. Through the work we are doing with Mercer we will identify criteria by which jobs will be evaluated.

Q) How do years of service affect pay?

A) Generally the median is the target salary and represents the mid point of a range. Once the range is determined for a given position, an individual's salary is normally determined based on experience and performance. Years of experience - both at W&L and in general - will be taken into account when determining where in the range an individual's pay should be.

Q) Will there be instances in which nonexempt employees will move into the exempt group?

A) Probably not as a result of this process, but hopefully opportunities for movement and career paths will become clearer. As you know, there may not always be existing opportunities for promotions, but we are looking at other ways employees can grow. For instance, Mercer has suggested using committee service and special assignments as ways to engage employees and to help them grow in their jobs.

Q) Were other campus position groups below the benchmarks as well?

A) Steve responded that public safety was another area that was below the median. This information came from a survey that Mercer did for Colgate University but that survey did not include facilities or food service employees. Going forward we hope to have better data for these groups. In addition, survey data from the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) seems to indicate that mid-level managers are also below the median.

Q) When was this salary survey done?

A) The survey that Mercer did for Colgate was done in the fall of 2007. Amy explained that Mercer added a factor to 'age' the data, so it should be comparable to a survey done in fall 2008.

Q) What is happening with Mercer classification/compensation project?

A) Mercer was on campus Monday to meet with the design team and president's council. They will spend a day with the Design Team on December 10 to review different approaches for W&L and to develop a model. After that we will share the work that we have done through focus groups on campus. Feedback from those focus groups will be used to further refine the program.

Q) Is there an office staff representative on the Design Team?

A) Emily Nicely is representing the office staff on the Design Team. Kelly Brown and Louis Uffelman are also on the Design Team. Sherry Wright is the W&L project lead and Jodi Owsley, Steve McAlister, Larry Peppers and Amy Barnes are also on the team. A suggestion was made that the names of the Design Team members be posted on a website.

Q) How was the Mercer design team chosen?

A) Amy explained that we selected one representative from the professional staff, one from the operations staff and one from the office staff. The goal was to put together a team that could work well together and represented balance across campus.

3. Other Discussion

Q) A committee member commented that Steve's statement about economic conditions was very helpful. Could there be more regular communication about these sorts of matters and what the board is working on?

A) Steve said that there are faculty representatives to the board and they report back to the faculty. There is no reason those reports could not be shared with staff as well. He added that these sorts of suggestions are very helpful as it is not always apparent to the administration what staff might be interested in knowing about. President Ruscio will continue to have town hall meetings like the one he had on work/life last month.

Q) Will there be another session on the EMERITI retirement insurance?

A) Yes. They are coming back to do additional sessions in December.

Q) A committee member said that after reading the minutes from last month, employees in my workgroup seemed split on the type of newsletter they would like to see. Could we have two newsletters - one that is more serious and another more human interest/lighter?

A) Amy said that the newsletter will most likely have a mix of both. There will only be one newsletter since producing a newsletter takes quite a bit of time and effort.

Q) Is there a way for employees to save through their paycheck?

A) Employees can set up a direct deposit to several different accounts if they like - this is a good way to save on a regular basis. Contact payroll to set this up. There is also a savings bond program they can tell you more about.

Q) Are withdrawals from supplemental retirement accounts at TIAA-CREF restricted?

A) Yes, in the sense that there are penalties for early withdrawal if you are under 59 ½. However, you may be able to take a loan against your account or may be eligible for a hardship withdrawal under very limited circumstances. Tony Cassidy from TIAA-CREF does individual counseling on campus and will be doing some open sessions in the future about investing during volatile financial times.

Q) Where do we stand on home loan benefit for non-exempt staff?

A) Steve explained that the mortgage benefit is funded through the endowment. The investment committee looks at it as a poor investment for endowment funds. There was much discussion about the mortgage benefit; however, it is a benefit that the board does not want to see expanded.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Katherine Snead, Human Resources.