

**Staff Conference**  
**June 17, 2014**  
**Whitton Auditorium**  
**2:00 PM**

Staff Assembly Members present: Margaret Williamson (chair), Rebecca Best, Grant Scurry, Sharen DuBard, Kelly McGinnis, Kelly Shelton, Debbie Garrick, Niki Behr, T.J. Carney, Jeanie Faris, Maria D'Agostino, Gena Smith

Absent: Rosanne Wallace

HR Representative present: Lisa Cowart

Call to Order

Margaret Williamson called meeting to order at 2:03 PM. She addressed Staff Conference and acknowledged the unusual circumstances on campus. She quoted a Winthrop colleague who said to her, "The institution will always be stronger than one individual."

Guest – Dr. Debra Boyd

Margaret invited Dr. Debra Boyd, University Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and now Acting Chief Executive Officer, to address Staff Conference.

Dr. Boyd made it clear that she was not acting president, but Acting Chief Executive Officer.

- There is still concern among staff that Staff Assembly does not have a representative to the Board of Trustees. Faculty Conference has had representation to the Board for a very long time. Dr. Boyd recognized that it is critical that we figure out the best way for all of us to have a voice.

Dr. Boyd addressed current circumstance and the suspension of President Jamie Comstock Williamson.

Dr. Boyd noted the following:

- Sometimes we have to make tough decisions. We have to be sure that what we are doing is in the best interest of the students – no student; no institution.
- What's going on right now?
- President Williamson has been suspended, but she is still president.
- On June 26, President Williamson has the opportunity to address the Board. She must respond to Board regarding whether she will address the Board and indicate which type hearing she chooses – either public or private.
- The events of June 13 were extraordinary. Those contractual/employment matters can and should be discussed in executive session.
- The Board gave Dr. Williamson notice of Termination with Cause and they will make no further comments until June 26.
- Dr. Boyd further noted that she understands that we (University staff and faculty) want to know the reasons for termination, and the Board will likely be asked to respond to a Freedom of Information Act request, but there may be some things we will never know because they are personnel matters.
- What does this mean for staff? What role does Dr. Boyd have now?
  - Debra is acting in an executive fashion – signing papers, approving ePAFs, etc.
- Dr. Boyd noted that decisions get made by those in power with many people in an advisory capacity, but those in an advisory capacity can only offer advice.

Dr. Boyd asked that as we think about what has and has not happened, keep this in mind –

- We all remain doing the jobs that support the University
- Today almost nothing is private, and Dr. Boyd pointed out that she is an advocate of free speech.
- She advised not leaping to conclusions.

#### Regarding June 13 Board Meeting

- Dr. Boyd noted that she although she was present, sitting outside the Board of Trustees meeting with everyone she does not know what happened in the meeting on June 13. If you ask and there is something she knows but she cannot share, she will say that, too.
- There was a public portion of Board meeting, at which time President Jamie Williamson was presented with the letter of notice.

#### Dr. Boyd opened the floor to questions

- **Question:** What do we expect – a neat, tidy end or a legal battle?
- **Dr. Boyd:** We don't know how long this will take or how short it will be. The work of the University goes on and the students will get a great education.
- **Question:** Has the newspaper asked for more information?
- **Dr. Boyd:** Every day. Two of the reporters who are pushing the hardest are Winthrop alums and their faculty taught them their skills well.
- **Question:** How quickly must the University respond to requests for information?
- **Dr. Boyd:** We have 15 working days to respond.
- **Question:** When this is over, will there be a meeting so that we know what happened?
- **Dr. Boyd:** We will have a way to inform the University what has occurred.
  - Dr. Boyd said to be careful of assumptions and a 'post hoc' logic fallacy ("After this, therefore because of this.") We cannot assume that because this first thing happened, it caused the next thing to happen.
- **Question:** If the President answers questions to the Board's satisfaction, will she not be fired?
- **Dr. Boyd:** That may be possible, but we do not know.
- **Question:** Is she (President Williamson) okay? Has someone checked on her?
- **Dr. Boyd:** She's fine. There is limited contact, but she is fine.
- **Comment:** Dr. Boyd commented that the actions of the Board of Trustees is not a rejection of the ideas President Williamson began. PAC met today to talk about next steps for moving forward with ideas.
- **Question:** Will you (Dr. Boyd) be getting help with work load?
- **Dr. Boyd:** I have lots of help.
- **Question:** If President Williamson decides not to contest, does she have to inform the Board, and when?
- **Dr. Boyd:** She does have to inform the Board, but I am not certain of the date at the moment. That date will be made public.
- **Comment:** "Thank you for coming today, Debra." Applause. Speaker noted that we are in capable hands with Debra.
- **Comment:** I hope the work of the Staff Assembly will not go to waste.
- **Dr. Boyd:** No, it won't. Staff Assembly is an idea "whose time has come" and has the unanimous support of PAC.
- **Question:** Do we know when Board will set tuition fees?
- **Dr. Boyd:** Hopefully, June 26 and no later than June 30.

- **Question:** How public will President's meeting with Board of Trustees be?
- **Dr. Boyd:** If President Williamson chooses to have a public hearing, it will be public for all to attend.
- **Question:** Who spoke to the freshmen Monday? (At Orientation, June 16)
- **Dr. Boyd:** Dr. Ardaiole.
- **Question:** Are they still planning to give custodial staff a raise?
- **Lisa Cowart (HR):** Yes, a 2% raise, per the state.

Margaret thanked Debra Boyd for her time and Debra left the Staff Conference.

### **Follow-Up**

Margaret followed up on questions from last staff conference and some of the questions/suggestions sent in via Staff Assembly website.

By-Laws – Staff Assembly has created and passed. Lisa Cowart sent them on to legal counsel for review, as was done with Faculty Conference By-Laws.

Meeting with President Williamson – Margaret met with Jamie on June 12, as had been planned. She asked how Staff Assembly should give suggestions. She also asked about football. Danny Nicholson is doing exploratory talks about football and the fall town hall meetings will go forward.

Alma Mater – Beginning July 1, 2014, the Tillman chimes will play alma mater at 11:00 AM each day.

Staff Assembly representation to Board – Margaret and Grant are attending the Board meetings. They will continue to attend Board meetings, but there is no time frame yet of when we will have a Staff Assembly rep to Board of Trustees.

Salary study will still happen; new evaluation process will still happen. Note that Staff Assembly cannot respond to questions regarding personnel matters that are asked or sent into the website.

### **Suggestions to website include:**

Free West Center memberships for staff. Margaret asked Grant Scurry to respond.

Grant: Noted he saw a lot of West Center members as he looked around the room. Grant addressed that member fees fund West Center operations, so membership fees are necessary. There are a wide range of amenities that will be posted on the Staff Assembly website. Grant also noted that West Center membership fees have not gone up since the Center opened in 2007.

Exit Interviews when employees leave. Margaret noted that there are benefits to the exit interview. Lisa Cowart noted that this is a good, sound HR practice and we can look into it. In the Exit Benefits interview issues do come up and are heard, but we can explore making it a more formal process like an Exit Interview.

**Question:** When will we know about health insurance premiums?

**Lisa Cowart:** August 27 this year for October enrollment. Employees who are temp and work at least 30 hrs/week will be eligible for the Affordable Care act in January 2015.

Comment regarding the Staff Assembly. Margaret was concerned because of a comment to the website that because many Staff Assembly representatives work directly for VPs or because we know VPs,

representatives would not be able to work in the best interest of the staff. Margaret responded that this is not true in any way.

Debbie Garrick commented that perceptions seem to be “us and them.” But Staff Assembly members are staff, and we are on Staff Assembly for limited terms. We will rotate off and others will be elected. We are all in this together.

#### **Questions from Staff Conference attendees**

- **Comment:** The Paint Department would like a title, a sign, within Facilities. All other departments have a sign. How can that happen?
- **Margaret:** We can address that.
- **Question:** Will we post meeting locations/dates on websites?
- **Margaret:** Yes – and noted next Staff Conference is July 15, 2 PM.
- **Concern:** There is a shift for some Facilities staff that is 4 AM – 12 PM, and those staff will not be on campus for a 2 PM meeting. Can we give that some consideration and think about an earlier meeting time?
- **Margaret:** Yes, we will take this into consideration.
- **Question:** Is there a place where we (staff) can read all of the comments and suggestions posted to the Staff Assembly website?
- **Margaret:** Staff Assembly website will have some questions and answers posted – and does already.
  - Gena Smith noted that suggestions discussed in Staff Assembly meetings or Staff Conference meetings will be in the minutes.
  - Margaret noted that not all comments or suggestions are appropriate for all to see, such as when someone posts a personnel matter.
- **Question:** Is there a free exchange of ideas and comments, somewhere staff can go and freely discuss things?
- **Margaret:** While there is a way to submit questions and comments anonymously to the Staff Assembly website, there is not a way to have a free exchange forum.
  - Staff member addressed that she had a Staff Only Facebook page, which she took down. Not every staff member participated; there seemed to be some confusion about it.

**Margaret reminded attendees that the next Staff Conference meeting is July 15.**

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:05 PM