

Staff Conference Meeting

Whitton Auditorium

January 20, 2015

Meeting called to order at 2:03 pm

Members present: Jeanie Faris, Kelly McGinnis, Grant Scurry, Margaret Williamson, Rosanne Wallace, Maria D'Agostino, TJ Carney, Jill Simpson, Sharen DuBard, Niki Behr, Rebecca Best

Members absent: Kelly Shelton, Laura Little

Approximately 68 staff members attending (includes assembly members)

Survey Results

Jeff Perez, Senior Counsel to the President/Public Affairs, introduced himself to the staff and gave a summary of his position and responsibilities. He handles speech writing, crisis communication with the media, as well as lobbying for Winthrop University. University Relations office was recently added to his department in order to stream line efforts with media issues and focus on initiatives together.

Jeff mentions the Chronicle on Higher Education survey is a good diagnostic tool but it will not be the only tool that is utilized. Winthrop is in line with the Carnegie Masters Schools participation at 67% (297 out of 600 participated in the survey). A few points of interest:

The bell curve for the results includes more on the 'good' side than the 'bad' side.

There were no scores in the 'poor' category.

We will expand the types of surveys used and start those on a multiyear schedule. This will ensure that we have time to review the results, execute new policies and then use the survey as a measure of our progress.

We had a low number of non-exempt employees that completed the survey. It was speculated that they had the opportunity and access to computer. When the university participates in another survey, supervisors will make sure they are encouraged to complete the survey.

HR provided additional information on a few subjects related to the survey and university improvement mentioned below.

There is a working group that Dr. Boyd established to come up with opportunities for Professional Development.

Employee Assistance Program – Initiating this program would require an outside vendor to offer programs to help employees with their work/life balance. This is not to be confused with the Employee Educational Assistance Program.

Performance Review updates - They hope to have the forms to the state next week for review and approval. There will be a training process for supervisors. All staff evaluations will have a universal due date in March.

Question: What if my job duties have changed over the years, will the job descriptions be updated in this new review process?

Part of the training supervisors will receive will include making sure the job descriptions are up to date and reflects what the employee currently does. If you have questions, make sure to talk to your supervisor about those updates.

Question: Will performance evaluations be mandatory?

Yes, Lisa Cowart would like to say that that they will be required. She has the support of Dr. Boyd and executive leadership. This will need to be a top-down initiative. In other words, upper management will be encouraging evaluations so that supervisors will understand the importance of the reviews for everyone. Employees need to know how they are doing performing their job duties and it is a chance to mention accomplishments and to communicate what is not going well. They are hoping the return rate on evaluations will be higher. It will take set up and thought but worth it in the end.

Jeff Perez continued the discussion regarding the points of progress for our current initiatives to include the Staff Assembly, Competitive Compensation Committee, Presidential Search Committee.

Question: What are the areas that you feel we need to improve?

Professional Development, Senior Leadership, communication

Jeff stated that a sense of engagement with informal opportunities to talk and interact is equally important for the campus community.

Faculty/Staff/Retirees Ceremony

Lisa Cowart assists in planning the ceremony each year along with DeeAnna Brooks, and they both feel that it would be a great time to shake things up. Margaret Williamson outlined a few of those changes.

Student Life Award – would be presented separately in their current reception

State Service Awards – presented separately at Faculty and Staff Conferences

Retiree Awards – would be honored at a breakfast/luncheon with 2 family members and 1 colleague invite

Presidential Citations – would be discontinued possibly due to the difficulty in getting nominations each year and hopefully replaced with another type of recognition structure.

Margaret opened the floor to those attending for their feedback on the changes.

Presidential Citations requirements are too restrictive. Changing the language on the nomination might help get more results. The commenter did not like the fact that the faculty and staff might be split between the groups. While there already appears to be a gap in our campus community between faculty and staff, the separation would increase that gap. They like to see what their peers are accomplishing and achieving.

The ceremony was an event where people could feel active with the Winthrop community. Maybe not do away with the citations all together but definitely doing it different is favorable. Make it fun and not all work by making it a picnic or something similar.

The ceremony is important for the comradery with faculty and staff. If the state service is branched out, the faculty probably could not do their presentation at the last conference due to curriculum action and governance items handled in that meeting.

It is nice to put a face to a name during the ceremony. The commenter liked the Presidential Citations over the Employee of the month. They did like the picnic as a group idea. They like to see what is happening on campus as they don't have many opportunities to do so during the year.

Presidential citations guidelines may be too specific, what is the purpose and would it be possible to broaden the requirements. If they are having a hard time getting nominations, make it a requirement that the dean of all the departments have to submit someone and then select from those nominations.

Presidential citations – Is it a big deal that they are hard to get? Would it take away from the process if they were getting a lot of them? Margaret clarified on this point that it is a problem getting them from some divisions.

Presidential citations – the commenter stated that they would hate to see drastic changes as it might create an atmosphere of apathy that one's efforts would not have a chance to be recognized, it is an opportunity for communication and motivation for achievement.

Presidential citations – as a possible way to decrease the overall time of the ceremony, remove the governmental piece from the president's speech since we will receive that at the opening address.

There is a historical value in the ceremony but it could use some spicing up.

Question: Do the nominations have to come from the VP of their division?

Comment: Any one can nominate but it does have to go to the VP for approval. DeeAnna gathers the nominations and presents to VP with additional information such as the frequency and type of citation that individual received in the past ceremonies. If they are denied, there are reasons that might not be known to the nominator.

Question: Will the Employee of the Month process be an equal opportunity or equal time process?

Comment: Emily Tobin clarified that there will be an application process. This process was NOT intended to be a replacement for presidential citation but a more centralized recognition opportunity and as a morale booster. The recipients will be decided through the Recognition Committee from the nominations received. Becky Best provided additional guidance on the commenter's question that Facilities does have a recognition process for the Grounds team and Custodian team. She is not sure of the criteria but the Custodian recipient is chosen in the winter and the Grounds recipient is chosen in the spring.

Question: Do the Retirees/faculty staff like be recognized? Is it a requirement to come and are they notified in advance?

Retirees are notified and given a choice to attend. Also those receiving a citation are notified in advance.

Comment: A suggestion to decrease the length of the ceremony would be to not read the biographies of retirees which are in the program and instead highlight some of the information.

Lisa Cowart said the ceremony is intended to do something special to honor the retirees and invite family members to celebrate in their retirement.

Question: Does it have to be either/or for ceremony verses lunch/picnic? Can it be both? Take a ½ day to celebrate, have a ceremony, mingle and talk?

Question: What about entertainment? Have the music department do some type of performance?

Comment: The ceremony is typically on study day so this might interfere with students that need to study for exams that start the next day.

Comment: Coastal Carolina has a talent show with the faculty and staff providing the entertainment.

Whatever decisions are to be made, they will need to happen quickly as preparation will begin to plan this year's ceremony. Nothing has been officially decided at this time.

Other Items

Bylaws are updated on the Staff Assembly website.

Campus and Community Involvement – 1200 lbs and \$150 donated to Project HOPE. If you still have items left over or not picked up, keep them for the next food drive as we will continue to support their food pantry. The committee is always open to more members, please consider being involved.

Recognition Committee – The committee will welcome new members so feel free to contact the chair, Emily Tobin. They hope to have approval soon on the Staff Member of the Month process.

Reminder to LIKE the FACEBOOK page!

Comment: Why don't they have hot water in Thurmond?

The staff assembly will follow up on this request and report their findings.

Comment: A question for Jeff Perez – Is there any update to the presidential search? They have indicated that they are encouraged by the pool of applicants. This search for our president will be different as there will be more feedback on the candidates. William Funk, the search firm hired for this presidential search, has indicated that he is pleased with the results.

The next conference meeting will be February 17th, 2015 at 9:30 am.

Meeting adjourned at 3:01 pm