

Winthrop University
Staff Conference Meeting Minutes
February 18, 2020
Dina's Place

Staff Assembly Present: Kara Cauthen, Jayme Charles, Thomas Cornelius, Katie Gawronski, April Hershey, Chris Johnson, Lydia Johnson, Jessica Martin, Claire Mooney-Melvin, Brittany Neely, Tanya Pettus

Absent: Johnathan Brabson, Kirk McSwain, Jill Simpson

Vacancies: None

Staff Present: Approximately 54

Call to Order

April Hershey, chair, called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. and announced the approval of the minutes from the January 7 Staff Assembly and January 21 Staff Conference meetings.

Leadership Q& A

1. *Does Winthrop have any insurance plans that will pay or partially pay for gym memberships?*
 - a. Dr. Mahony said that the state system does not have any insurance plans that allow for this. He suggested that staff look at the employee discounts offered to see if gym memberships are included there, and reminded everyone that the West Center is also an option.
2. *When will we start seeing action taken by Winthrop on the compensation study?*
 - a. Dr. Mahony said there have been some misconceptions on campus regarding the study. He said the decision was made five years ago to try to address compensation issues internally, and that some efforts were made on a year-by-year basis, which was not very efficient or effective. The current study conducted through Sibson began last year, and was intended to be a systematic, long-term plan to identify gaps and figure out how to address them. Hopefully, the board will be addressing the study at their retreat in March, and staff will hear something by April.
3. *I have some real concern that the upcoming pay philosophy does not mention pay for merit. If our future pay philosophy doesn't include pay for merit, what incentive is there for employees to work hard? Merit pay would allow departments to show appreciation for those who are truly doing more than the basics. While it is great we are working towards paying people to reach industry standards, if the ones receiving it are the less performing employees, we haven't really done much good in ensuring there are people left to run Winthrop well.*
 - a. Dr. Mahony said that many equity gaps have been identified, and fixing those is our top priority before instituting merit raises. Merit raises can be very complicated in a large organization, because supervisors in different areas can be doing evaluations differently. It can take time to figure out the proper way to do it.
4. *Would senior leadership please consider moving the holiday on July 3rd to a day during spring break when faculty and students are already off, to the Wednesday before Thanksgiving when most schools are off and parents can be with their kids, or even to December 23rd so staff don't have to be the only ones on campus before Christmas?*

- a. Dr. Mahony said that he did form the calendar committee to look at things like this. It is too late to change this year's calendar, but the committee can consider this in future years when the 4th of July falls on a weekend.
5. *Why does Winthrop do an annual United Way campaign? While I appreciate many like this charity, why isn't Winthrop's major fundraiser, including offering paycheck withdrawals, the Winthrop Foundation which more directly benefits Winthrop students?*
 - a. Dr. Mahony said many institutions partner with United Way as a way of giving to the local community. He said that staff are able to give to the Foundation through payroll deduction as well. He said there is no intention to pressure anyone to give to United Way, and that Winthrop does not track donations given by division or in any way that could be traced to individuals. If someone does feel pressured to give, then that is a conversation to have with HR.

Dr. Mahony said he did not have any updates from the state to share, but that enrollment is up about 3% including about 115-120 degree-seeking students. The number of applications received is also up about 7% over last year, which was already a record-breaking year.

April thanked Dr. Mahony for being a regular visitor to staff conference over the years and for taking the time to answer staff questions.

April said a 6th question was submitted asking why good news is not being shared through Winthrop's social media accounts. In addition to the main Winthrop accounts, there are many specialized accounts for programs and departments that may share more specific news about their areas. All official sites registered through UCM can be found in the Social Networking Site Directory. There are also many student-run accounts, especially on Instagram. She also explained that the Daily Digest is not always the best medium for sharing notifications, as it is primarily intended for events.

Presidential Search Update

Dr. Kimberly Faust, Chief of Staff & Secretary to the Board of Trustees, spoke about the presidential search.

Dr. Faust said that going back over five years, there was a clause in the university president's contract that stipulated that the contract would automatically renew for one year if the board took no action. The board wanted to renegotiate to remove this clause, so that the board would have to take action to renew a president's contract. Dr. Mahony was okay with this change. The board could have voted to renew Dr. Mahony's contract at any time, but he found another job and the board had to move quickly to find a replacement. Dr. Faust said that Dr. Mahony's contract had included a tenured faculty position for life, and clarified that the interim president will only have a faculty position during his time as interim.

The board had roughly 12 weeks to find an interim president. They began by looking at semifinalists from the prior two presidential searches, and found a handful who had retired. They also received suggestions from faculty and staff, and reached out to all of the suggestions to invite them to apply. The board then met with vice presidents, deans, members of faculty leadership, and current and former members of staff assembly to discuss what characteristics would be important in an interim president.

The applications received from former semifinalists and suggested candidates were then compared to those characteristics, and Dr. Hynd was the closest match. HR regulations do allow for only one person to be interviewed when that person especially fits the job requirements. Faculty and staff had asked for very specific things, including someone who had been a president elsewhere, who had experience at a school without football, and who had experience with South Carolina and SACS specifically.

After Dr. Hynd was announced as the preferred candidate, 48 faculty and staff, and 10 students, were invited to meet and talk with him. These were not interviews, but were intended to give faculty, staff, and students an opportunity to provide feedback if they had concerns before the board voted.

Going forward, the search for the permanent president will be a typical, standard process that begins months in advance. Most likely, a consultant will be hired, and there will be listening groups comprised of alumni, faculty/staff, students, and community members. The position will be advertised nationally with plenty of time for applications and recommendations to come in. Semifinalists will be kept private so that their current jobs are not put at risk, and then 3-4 finalists will be brought to campus with plenty of opportunities to provide feedback.

A question was raised regarding why the board has not responded to the recent negative press in student publications and in the Herald. Dr. Faust said the board is hesitant to respond publicly, because there are things they promised Dr. Mahony to keep private. Dr. Hynd may speak more openly about some of these things in the future, and he will continue to attend Staff Conference meetings.

Dr. Faust said a question that comes up often is whether staff can have a representative to the board like faculty and students do now. Her contacts in Columbia have been following what students are saying, and are using this as evidence as to why students should not have representation on the board. Negative things have been said that are not based in fact. While there is an orientation process to explain the role of the student representative, there is a new CSL leader every year, so knowledge does not build up. The legislature is considering eliminating all representatives to board of trustees, so we are not sure what will happen going forward. Things may become more restrictive. At present, the legislature says the board of trustees may decide to include the president of student body leadership, but does not mention a faculty or staff representative at all. Dr. Faust also clarified that only state legislature can give authority to a voting member of the board.

Campus Nutrition at Winthrop

Cristina Caro, regional dietician & wellness manager for Sodexo Universities, spoke about the work she does at Winthrop and other schools in the region. Her duties include demonstrations and expos to build awareness and skills. She is also available for classes, conferences, workshops, and lunch-and-learns. She can also be a resource for information and infographics if she can't physically attend an event.

The regional dietician is also involved in assisting students with special dietary needs within guidelines set by the ADA and Winthrop's policies. Sodexo tries to offer a wide variety to accommodate preferences, but can't always make changes for all requests. For students on medically required diets, accommodations can be made if Sodexo is contacted in advance. Sodexo does try to source ingredients

locally and in season when possible, and also offers the Simple Servings menu which is free of the most common allergens.

Cristina also shared information on the Virtual Dining Tour, which is available on the Winthrop dining homepage. <https://winthrop.sodexomyway.com/>

Committee Updates

- Media & Communications: Kara Cauthen shared that the next Staff Stuff will be sent out the first week in March, and invited anyone who is interested to attend the next meeting on March 10.
- Campus & Community Involvement: April said there has been a leadership change for this committee. Judy Longshaw and Chris Johnson will be leading going forward, and Judy is the primary contact. There will be a food drive mid-April through May, and Food Truck Friday is also coming up.
- Professional Development: Nicole Chisari shared information related to the Mindfulness in the Workplace event coming up on March 4.
- Recognition: Brittany Neely recognized two new staff members, and Miranda Knight shared the nominees for Staff Member of the month. Starr Albert was the winner.

Announcements

- Zan Jones reminded everyone of the upcoming Day of Understanding event on February 20
- Shayna Foxworth announced that Grad Finale would be taking place February 19 at the Bookstore Commons.
- Wellness Screenings are coming up in April, and optional retirement meetings will also be taking place through April.
- April announced that this week is Graduate Education week, and shared some of the events taking place.
- Jayme Charles announced that Safe Zones Training will be taking place on March 3rd and encouraged staff in student-facing roles especially to take part.
- The next Staff Conference meeting will be March 17th in Whitton Auditorium.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.