

Combined Clerical and MTTP (Virtual) Roundtable Minutes

May 6, 2020

Staff Senate President, Amy Driscoll McNulty welcomed everyone and emphasized the Senate's commitment to working for staff despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. She ensured that while some goals must be sidelined for the moment, they will not be forgotten and the Senate will return to addressing them as soon as possible.

The Senate voted to postpone senator elections to fall 2020 with all senators staying in place until an election can be held.

The Senate sent a video Thank You to Fr. Pilarz for continuing pay until May 31. He signed in to the May meeting to address the Senate, and expressed gratitude for all we do and for sending the video.

Bill Hurst thanked the Clerical Senators for inviting the MTTP constituency to combine roundtables as the current circumstances present even more of a challenge than usual to get the group together.

Some questions were posed prior to the meeting. Clerical Senators reached out to Patricia Tetreault, Director of HR who sent these responses:

Q: I think the biggest question our minds is will we be furloughed and what does that mean for our health insurance costs? I don't think we can get an answer for this until it is announced to everyone. Just anticipating the question.

A: Of course, this is a critical question. As we have throughout this crisis, we consider things carefully and thoughtfully using as much information as possible that is available to us. As of today, no decisions have been made. However, please know that this is a priority and there will be communication on this issue as soon as practically possible.

Q: Review the Inequity between life insurance policy(death benefit) between exempt and non exempt staff.

A: We have discussed life insurance periodically in the past and I'm happy to talk about it again. Generally, a life insurance benefit is intended as part of an income security plan, it's not a "value" of someone's life. Many plans provide a benefit equal to an employee's annual salary. Just talking out loud, an approach to solving the perceived inequity would be to transition to this salary model approach. Then everyone's benefit is aligned with their annual salary. The challenge is that this change could result in a benefit increase for some, but it would decrease for others. I'm certainly willing to review this further once we are able to refocus on non-COVID matters.

Q: Now that face masks are mandatory, who will enforce that? I have seen a few members of faculty walking the halls of LSC with no mask on even though there are signs on all of the doors stating it is mandatory.

A: HR will enforce this. Please notify the Office of Human Resources, Brian (Loughney) or I directly. We did contact the CAS Dean's Office last week about faculty in LSC. However if it is not resolved, please let me know.

Unfortunately, Ms. Tetreault was not able attend as she'd intended.

Topic submitted: Magis award should go to all maintenance staff, not someone who works from home:

Response: In the last Senate meeting, the senate discussed ways of doing special for the maintenance staff when we return. The committee that manages the Meg Cullen Brown Magis award explained that the platform of the award doesn't fit the current situation, and also reminded the attendees that the award is for those that go above and beyond. At this time, there are many staff members going above and beyond, even though they may be working from home. Those attending gave maintenance a round of applause for their current efforts and shared that in almost every meeting gratitude and positive compliments are offered to maintenance staff.

Other questions were raised at the meeting.

Q: Maintenance staff now have their temperatures taken when they show up to work their shift. Are other departments doing the same?

A: Trades staff also has their temperatures taken when they come in each shift. UPD does not at this time. UPD has masks available if anyone needs one.

Q: What is the protocol if someone does have a temperature?

A: If temperature is over 100° you must notify HR. Not sure what happens from there. A representative suggested calling the PA Dept of Health to get tested. Mohegan Sun is a drive thru testing site. You call PA dept of Health and they will schedule a test for you (no cost to you). To be tested you must have a fever over 100° and one other symptom of the illness.

Q: Can I come to campus to get some things from my office?

A: You must have permission from your supervisor to be on campus. You must have your Royal ID card with you. You must contact UPD to let you in as all building are locked. The names of those who make a habit of coming to campus will be sent to their supervisors.

Q: What about the mail? What is happening with that?

A: Department mail can be picked up at the Print Shop off of Jefferson Avenue at the following times: M 10-12, W 9-12, R 10-12, F 9-12. You must have your Royal ID, and permission from your supervisor.

Q: Are the summer events all canceled?

A: There have no official cancelations yet. The situation is being monitored and cancellations will happen as necessitated by conditions.

Q: Why aren't we having a virtual graduation?

A: Student Government polled the graduating seniors to ask their preference of either postponing graduation to a safer time or a virtual graduation at the scheduled time. The overwhelming majority wanted to postpone. Fr. Pilarz honored their request.

Q: Will we get reimbursed for our unused parking passes?

A: The focus is on students reimbursements right now. We do not have an official answer on staff reimbursements.

Q: How many students remain living on campus?

A: There are 66 students still on campus. Food service must serve them two meals a day in DeNaples.

Q: Are the students wearing masks?

A: They appear to be mindful of social distancing, even when outside during the warm, sunny days, but not all are wearing masks.

Several questions were raised that we were unable to answer without input from Ms. Tetreault. We sent these questions to her. The questions and her responses are below.

Roundtable questions for Patti Tetreault from May 6, 2020

1. If we are furloughed does that mean, we go without pay and are not able to collect while we're off?

You would be encouraged to file for unemployment and the determination would be up to the unemployment office. The University will not dispute unemployment. Benefits would continue because it is a temporary situation, and you would be required to pay your portion of insurance.

2. If furloughed, are 9, 10, and 11-month employees eligible to collect?

In this situation, timing is key. If a furlough was implemented, staff would likely be able to collect if the furlough coincides with the time you would have been working. Ultimately, decisions regarding unemployment benefits are made by the unemployment office.

3. If there are furloughs, will there be a furlough FAQ page/website?

Most furlough questions would most likely be referred to the unemployment office, as Patti and the rest of HR would not be able to answer specific questions about eligibility. However, any and all information about a furlough, that is available to HR, would be provided.

4. Instead of furloughs, will they do buyouts?

This option is being considered, however a buyout now, would not look like previous buyouts. Previous buyouts have been very generous, bridging employees to Medicare. The University is not in the same position, at this time. If buyouts were to be offered, they would be based on age and years of service.

5. We know that employees on campus now are having their temperature checked. When the rest of staff returns to campus, will that continue and how will it be managed?

Right now, this is a pilot program in preparation if we have to comply. These checks are not mandatory because we do not have any positive cases of COVID-19 on campus.

If we are required to take temperatures in the future, we would use a questionnaire, provided by the CDC. Employees would be asked a series of questions about possible symptoms and their temperature would be taken by a no touch thermometer. If your temperature were to register at 100.4 or above, you would be instructed to go home and contact your primary physician.

We could have to do this when campus reopens. There are many things to work out, as HR would want this process to be as confidential as possible. There will be many logistics to work out, if recording temperatures should become necessary. Some ideas have been talked about, but decisions on how to handle this, should we be required to comply, have not been made at this time.

6. What is being used to check temperatures?

No touch thermometer.

7. Will we have separate entrances for students and staff?

Unsure at this time. That would be difficult to manage.

8. What is the difference between a furlough and a lay off?

These definitions are usually intermingled. In Patti's mind, a furlough is a temporary reduction of staff (partial or full) and benefits would continue, with the employee continuing to pay their portion of the insurance cost. A layoff is more long-term or permanent and would have benefit implications, meaning the employee would have to purchase Cobra or find another personal plan. The University's goal is to avoid furloughs all-together.