

TO: Staff Senate  
FROM: Pauline Palko  
DATE: March , 2016  
SUBJECT: Minutes of the February 10, 2016 Meeting

---

In attendance: Ms. Barrett Notarianni, Ms. Klien, Ms. Mecadon, Ms. Palko, Ms. Tucker, Ms. Tokash, Mr. Barrett, Ms. Edwards, Mr. Hallock, Mr. Roginski, Mr. Sakowski, Ms. Shimsky, Ms. Bevacqua, Ms. Butler, Ms. Cook, Ms. Densvich Sheils, Ms. Driscoll-McNulty, Ms. Hollingshead, Ms. Johnson, Mr. Krzan, Ms. Kovalcin, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Wetherell.

Ms. Tetreault, Liaison

Not in attendance: Ms. Schofield, Ms. Cali, Ms. Barnoski, Mr. Griguts, Mr. Pilger, Ms. Thomas, Mr. Wasalinko, Ms. Grissinger, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Strickland.

**Welcome:**

- Mr. Wetherell called the meeting to order at 10:05 am, in the PNC Bank Board Room, Brennan Hall. Ms. Bevacqua offered the opening prayer.
- Attendance was checked, quorum met for voting purposes.

**Review of November meeting minutes:**

Minutes approved with no changes.

**Approval of Agenda:**

Agenda approved with no changes.

**Special Guest Speaker: Father Kevin Quinn, University President**

Father offered some remarks relative to recent events on campus and addressed some concerns he's been hearing from staff.

- For the last several months Father has been heavily invested in the Faculty contract negotiations, and strategic planning, and therefore may have seemed distant, but hasn't forgotten about the staff.
- The University of Scranton Staff is very important to the success of the University.
- The Board of Trustees approved the Strategic Plan: staff is critical to the successful implementation of the plan.
- Father has been made aware of staff budgeting concerns. Father ensured the Senate that the Comprehensive Resource Review is not balancing the budget on the backs of the staff. Each department will be evaluated to determine how to be

more efficient in doing all that is done so well. To be financially responsible, The University can't just cut and continue to cut, but must look for and develop new revenue streams. The process to balance the cost of education is a complicated one, and one in which everyone participates.

- In an effort to reconnect with the University community, Father has offered several sessions of "Coffee with the President" to faculty, and will be offering the same to all staff, just he did when he first arrived at the university. All staff will be invited to register first come, first served to attend a session in Scranton Hall.

Father then opened the floor to questions.

Question was raised regarding the budgeting of the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan is our highest aspirations going forward. First we are addressing budgeting of the plan at the college level, then the department level. Right now we are at about the midway point for funding. Goal is to address appropriately. We will not defund good, established programs to fund new ones. We will prioritize those programs that don't require much money to implement. For some, new sources of funding will be necessary and may have to wait a bit. Fundraising is a big part of the funding process. Planners and budgeters work hand in glove because it's necessary to do so to get the job done. Not every department will have something to do with each piece of the plan, global, integrated, engaged, because it's not appropriate.

A Senator asked if looking ahead over the next five years if there are any new buildings or major renovations of buildings in the works.

First, Ed Steimetz will be unveiling a program with Sitelines, outside experts who will manage deterioration of buildings (deferred maintenance) over the next ten years. Thankfully we stay on top of that here and our buildings are in fairly good shape. Sitelines will undertake a ten-year project of evaluating each building's needs. This will be costly, but is necessary, and needs to be figured into our budget for buildings.

The next capital improvements would have to be focused on the athletic facilities, both fields and Byron and John Long center, but as there is no funding in place yet, these are aspirational goals.

A Senator stated that there have been many conversations happening regarding cutting positions to save money and about the process used when positions held by long-time employees were eliminated. The impression he is hearing is that position cuts of long serving employees was budget driven. Generally speaking, staff thought that it could have, and should have been done better given the closeness of the community, and that the employees should have been given prior notification and time to prepare so that they could apply for other positions at the University had they desired to do so. To lose employees with such wealth of University history and knowledge was a tragedy.

Father stated that specific reasons for cuts could not be discussed because of privacy, but shared that not all cuts were for budgetary reasons. Generally the University does not cut positions. Although we struggle, we manage to balance the budget. Only when left with no other option, would the University eliminate a position with an incumbent in it. It's a rare circumstance when it happens here, but happens often at other institutions. The University is concerned about how we treat anyone that is asked to leave; people terminated are given notice when possible. Father also confirmed that The Staff Window Retirement Plan did help with the budget.

A Senator asked if Father envisioned a better way to communicate with the University as a whole stating that information recently shared with faculty regarding the contract would have been helpful to everyone's understanding of how they fit or don't fit into this, and calms fears.

In response, Father said Cabinet thought long and hard about whom to communicate information and was conscious that half of the campus wasn't getting the information and was concerned about that. In the end, it was decided that since it was the faculty contract, the communication should go only to faculty, but Father also confirmed that he is aware that decisions made regarding the faculty do effect staff. Father agreed that the entire staff should be kept abreast of what's happening, but in that circumstance, conversations were with faculty only.

Another senator pointed out that Senate instituted the Communication Forums because staff most often report they want more and better communication.

A senator asked Father to share his top revenue aspirations.

The principal driver of revenue is largely new and in demand academic programs, such as the increasing demand for programs in PCPS. The business plan behind building Edward Leahy Hall was to be able to increase our program offerings to meet demand, and to house these programs. Also increasing our graduate school population, largely on-line, but not exclusively. There are high start-up costs with on-line programs but once set those costs come down. We have no plans to grow our undergraduate population because we feel we can best manage classes of 950 annually.

Father also shared that new gifts have increased since Gary Olsen came on board at the University. The Board of Trustees are in preliminary discussions around the next Capital Campaign; those discussions will continue for the next two years.

A Senator mentioned that whenever it's announced that a consultant has been hired, staff often question the wisdom of and cost of hiring consultants. Realizing they are expensive, do we need them as often as we hire them?

Father admitted that he gets this question often and that it is expensive to hire consultants, and the cost of using them is considered, but if the task is specialized, and we do not have the necessary experience in-house, or an unbiased judgement is necessary we will hire a consultant. At times a certain level of objectivity is necessary when making difficult decisions, and an insider's judgement may be compromised.

A senator inquired as to the status of the Search for a new Executive Director of the Jesuit Center.

Father shared that the search has closed. There are a number of candidates, and the process will continue. Father's hope is that by the new fiscal year a permanent executive director will be in place.

Adding to that, Father shared that after internal review, and with the belt tightening happening all over campus, Father decided two Associate Provosts were not needed, and the search was amended to only one. Every department has to take a hit. The job description for the one Associate Provost is being reworked and by the 2016-2017 academic year the search will be underway. Currently we have one Interim Associate Provost.

Father thanked the staff for all they do for the University, their time, questions, and attention.

### **Liaison Report:**

#### Campus Works

The Campus Works Business Process Review Initiatives scheduled for February 10, 2016 was postponed. The focus of this review is on the student experience, registration, Advancement, and then the Human Resources and the payroll process.

The Campus Works people will be on campus today (February 10, 2016) talking with facilities. Those asked to participate are encouraged to be open and honest. A representative analysis can only be accomplished with accurate information.

#### Highmark Transition

Issues with Highmark have settled down. If you do have issues, please call Eileen or Beth in HR.

#### Staff Compensation Plan Analysis

Sibson will be on campus February 18 meeting with the Staff Senate Focus Group. The goal is to draft policies to send to Cabinet regarding grades and policies. Plan is to have them implemented for 2016-2017. At this point we don't know if we will be able to increase salaries yet because that is financially driven. Hopeful that the plan itself can be implemented so we can take it from there.

## Act 153 Background Checks

Only those with direct control of minors are asked to do it. Those people have completed the checks and it has not been as onerous or costly as we expected because it impacts very few staff. Pennsylvania legislature exempts matriculating students seventeen years of age from the policy, but high school scholars are not. This only impacts a few staff and faculty.

Regarding the Regis students or summer training camps for middle-school age students: Most are entities renting our campus, therefore the responsibility is theirs and is in the contractual language. If the camp is our own, we do the necessary background checks.

Jennifer LaPorta, Director of Equity and Diversity continues to train faculty and staff. The focus in the spring will be on Responsible Employees staff training at the department level.

Ms. Tetreault reminded everyone of the For Your Benefit Series schedule that was recently emailed to all staff and available on the HR website.

A senator asked about the policies for short-term and long-term disability requiring staff to use 10 days before going on short-term disability. If the person knows they are going to need time to recover, and have accumulated a lot of sick time, why can't they use more than 10 days to elongate the leave?

Ms. Tetreault stated that both benefits are generous and haven't always been so. Both are self-funded. The ten-day requirement is intentional so staff don't deplete their sick leave balance unnecessarily. When the policy was originally structured and put in to place it worked well, but over time things have changed. The policy is due for review but Human Resources has not been able to do so yet.

Could a person extend short-term disability with accrued sick time?

Each person's ability to return to work is evaluated; during the evaluation process, the University continues to pay the person, so there is no need for them to use their sick time.

Ms. Tetreault encouraged staff to apply for short term disability so an absence doesn't use up all accrued sick time. If a staff person is out several days, due to staffing needs, have to prompt FMLA and short term disability. This is a 100% benefit and does not drain your sick time.

The possibility of donating sick time to another employee who needs it was also raised.

Ms. Tetreault has seen it done successfully with vacation time at other institutions, but stated that it does not work as well with sick time. The issue becomes 'how will the decisions be made and under what circumstances', that's key to the policy.

## **Presidents Report:**

### Active Shooter Training—

On behalf of Don Bergmann, Chief of University Police, Mr. Wetherell extended an offer to come to the March meeting to either present a short introduction to Active Shooter training, or the longer (about an hour) actual Active Shooter Training. Chief Bergmann and his colleague Bob Kelly would come to our meeting and present the training. The training does take into consideration your department's specific location, and is willing to work with you in your space. Chief Bergmann is working with Human Resources to make this training part of the onboarding process so that all new employees are trained appropriately coming into the University. A senator expressed concern that this training is considered optional and is not mandatory for all employees.

Since some of the senators have already had the training in their own departments and felt that being in their own surroundings would be most beneficial, the senate agreed that the introduction and opportunity to schedule a department session would be most beneficial as they could then promote the training to their own department supervisors.

Any department that wants to schedule Active Shooter Training should contact Erica Armstrong to schedule a session.

A senator asked if Don would agree to answer questions on other topics. It was suggested that questions be sent to Mr. Wetherell in advance of the meeting.

Looking forward Don Bergmann will attend the March meeting, Dr. Boomgaarden will attend the April meeting, and Mr. Steinmetz may revisit the Senate in May to give us an update on the budget.

UPC-will continue to push for resources to come together. In case you missed it, Ed Steinmetz did a fabulous job of saving the University 2-3 million dollars by refinancing our debt.

Hoverboard Policy—Due to safety problems with these devices and students returning to campus, the issue had to be addressed quickly. The policy on hoverboards on campus was created and distributed to campus via email. Since this affects everyone on campus, the policy has to go through UGC. Mr. Wetherell asked for comments or discussion on the policy. There were no comments.

Roundtables—Professional Constituency: March 21, MTTP: March 23, Clerical: March 23.

## **Committee Reports**

Finance—Nothing to report

Election and Membership—Save the date cards for the meet and greet have gone out. Call for nominations will go out March 1. Committee is not yet sure how many positions will be available for each constituency until meeting with HR.

Communications—Tentative dates for the Spring Communication Symposium are March 14 and 17. Three academic deans may be invited. Suggestion was made to include Dean Kratz of the Library as there are many new and exciting things going on in the Library.

Social Events & Community—Nothing new to report

Recognition and Excellence—Kim Hurst from Payroll is the Spirit Award winner for February. Planning continues for the Staff Senate Awards Luncheon in May.

Staff Development—Happy to say, we've begun planning the staff Barbecue for May 5, thanks to generous support from the Jesuit Center.

By-laws Committee: The committee met again to reviewing the section of the Staff Handbook, Disciplinary & Corrective Action and to compare to similar sections in the handbooks of other Jesuit institutions. The committee hopes to compile a list of suggestions and submit them to Human Resources by the end of the academic year.

### **Items from the Floor**

No items were raised from the floor.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 11:19 am.