

Staff Advisory Committee
September 21, 2023 – 1:30 p.m.

Members Present: Joyce Arnold-Henson, Eric Carlile, Charlene McClain, Gail Gentry, Joni Gilmore, Birgit Hoffman, Amy McCoy, Autumn McDaniel, Peggy Nettenstrom, Samantha Peterson, Amanda Ramsey, Lisa Rice, Sarah Starkey, Noel Stojkov, Denette Way

Members Absent: Melanie Mabry, Debbie Pennebaker, Gary Stafford

Others Present: President Oldham, Lee Wray, Kevin Vedder, Donna Schrock

Summary:

Approved Agenda

Approved April 20, 2023 minutes

Discussed Staff Day 2023 and Evaluations

Discussed Flex Schedule

Discussed the Mercer-Compensation Study

Elected Vice-Chair for 2023-24

Comments by the President

Proceedings:

Chair Sarah Starkey called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. Joni Gilmore motioned to approve the agenda for September 21, 2023. Lisa Rice seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Charlene McClain motioned to approve the April 20, 2023 minutes. Eric Carlile seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Starkey introduced herself and welcomed everyone to the committee. Starkey read the Purpose/Objectives of the Staff Advisory Committee to the President from the Procedures and shared her e-mail address (sstarkey@tntech.edu), phone extension (#3301) and location on campus at Prescott, room 207, for anyone who may want to contact her.

Starkey went over the evaluations from Staff Day highlighting some of the comments. There were audio issues and would like hand held microphones in order to hear better. Staff Day could be geared more toward staff issues and not necessarily student related. Starkey pointed out that someone suggested that the Staff Advisory Committee send out a survey a couple times a year to give time for staff to think about issues they would like covered. Starkey felt that staff on

campus do not know who the Staff Advisory Committee to the President was or what the committee did and how the committee represented them to the President of the University.

Rice added that the comments she heard from people were that they were very appreciative of the event and the shortness of the day. Rice felt there was more cooperation and support from supervisors and thanked President Oldham for sending out his email. Starkey asked that people look over the comments and consider being a part of the planning committee for the next Staff Day. Birgit Hoffman agreed that the shorter day was better and felt this one was more staff oriented. Hoffman added that the question and answer portion after each segment was very beneficial. Everyone agreed the attendees really liked the t-shirts.

Starkey informed the committee that there was no budget for Staff Day and everything provided was purchased through the President's Office. Starkey cautioned there was a policy on campus regarding giving employees items and to consider there was no budget when planning future events. Hoffman added the vendors in the hallway had giveaways for anyone who wanted them. There were positive comments on the Food Pantry and the donations received were appreciated.

Kevin Vedder explained the difference between a Flex Schedule and Compensatory Time. Compensatory time was used instead of overtime pay and must be paid out. Flex Schedule was considered alternate work arrangements such as hybrid work arrangement, compressed work weeks, flexible work schedules which were at the discretion of the management if those alternative work schedules would work for their department. Human Resources have made the Deans, Department Chairs and supervisors aware that flexible schedules were a possibility if it worked for the department. Vedder added that some departments do not work well on a flex schedule and others do.

Rice mentioned there seemed to be a disconnect on equality on how that was given out from department to department. Rice continued that some academia told they were not allowed to use a flex schedule due to students on campus while other academia were. Some clerical and staff felt like they were being cheated when it came to an opportunity to work a flex schedule versus compensatory time versus overtime. Vedder replied that it was not conveyed to academia that they were not allowed to use a flex schedule but was to be determined by management of that department and suggested to have a conversation with management to better understand why not. Vedder added that due to the variety of the work on campus not everyone would be able to work an alternative work schedule. Employees can go to Human Resources if they felt they were not being heard at the department level and Human Resources can discretely go to the department to try and help give options.

Vedder stated the Mercer-Compensation Study interviewed four different populations on campus; Executive group, Academic-Provost Office, Supervisors and Managers, and employees. The Staff Advisory Committee was interviewed as a representation of the clerical and staff employees on campus. The main themes of the study were put on the Human Resource website and employees had the opportunity to add items they felt were not being covered. Vedder added that the study was refining the job architecture to create an approach that was more modern, to provide opportunities for job advancement and development. Next, they will go out into the local community and look at regional positions to see where Tennessee Tech was salary wise and determine how to move forward.

Starkey stated that the main feedback from others on campus was they were not asked directly their opinion and that employees felt they did not make enough money. Starkey acknowledged that employees can be directed to the webpage and add comments and stated the Staff Advisory Committee can only be as involved and aware as we are made aware. Starkey commented that the Staff Advisory committee should try to connect back to the clerical and staff employees to let them know they can reach out to the committee with concerns, to also make employees more aware of who the committee was and what they do. Vedder agreed that the Staff Advisory committee was a representative body of the clerical and staff and work closer with them. Vedder added to let Human Resources know of questions and concerns that come up so they are made aware of topics that may need to be addressed in one of the HR Office Hours that are held. HR Office Hours are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month for an hour.

Starkey read the definition and duties of the Vice-Chair and asked for nominations. Eric Carlile and Lisa Rice were nominated. Carlile won the final vote for Vice-Chair.

President Oldham stated that Dr. John Liu would be the new Vice President of Research and Economic Development starting October 1, 2023. Liu was very experienced and had worked at Auburn and Syracuse. Tennessee Tech hit a record high in funding for research last year of \$36,000,000 and near \$40,000,000 for this year.

Oldham commented that the Ashraf Islam Engineering Building was on schedule to be done early April. The Advanced Construction and Manufacturing Engineering Building (ACME) was in the final stages of design. Everyone had moved out of Johnson Hall and into Foundation Hall for a couple of years, the design was complete with additional fundraising to be done. Oldham stated the Peachtree Road Project was on schedule with the 10th Street cut through by Clement Hall and the Henderson Hall Parking lot would be reopened by October 31, 2023. The rest of the project should be done by early January.

Oldham stated that the special legislative session that was called in last month was about safety, \$30,000,000 was allocated to higher education for security upgrades on campus and Tennessee Tech put in a request for upgrades to security. Oldham added that no matter how safe Tennessee Tech was, we were always vulnerable. Tennessee Tech does a lot of training and were very forward thinking in how to approach improved awareness on campus. There was a great Threat Assessment Team in place and a Care Team that reached out and provided assistance to those in need.

Oldham concluded by stating Tennessee Tech was one of six Tennessee Public and Private Universities that ranked nationally by Forbes Magazine. US News Report ranked 1600 universities nationwide and Tennessee Tech was in the top 250 in the national category, fourteen public and private universities were from Tennessee with Tennessee Tech being number two out of seven public universities nationally. Oldham stated enrollment was up over 10,000 students this year.

Birgit Hoffman asked if there were people in each building that carried a gun? Oldham replied that by law Tennessee Tech was not allowed to know and added that for a person to legally carry a gun on campus they must register with campus police and campus police must keep that confidential. Fifty to sixty people have registered to carry a weapon.

Other Such Matters: Starkey stated there were concerns on the new program Coursedog and how it was rolled out. Starkey read that it was stated in a training to “just use the system, not allowed to communicate with our peers, and the Provost will deal with it”. Starkey asked if the committee thought there were more concerns from the class scheduler side of the program or the event scheduling side? Joni Gilmore thought it was just because it was new, once you get into it the program was user friendly. Gilmore added that in the past you would call and talk with someone to hold a classroom and they would get back with you, with Coursedog you go online and schedule it and not talk to anyone. It makes people nervous due to the fact that anyone can reserve any space on campus and a room may not be available as it was in the past. Brandi Fletcher, the director who rolled out Coursedog, had said that the people within the building will get a room before people from other buildings could reserve it. It was commented that people have requested rooms earlier than in the past and it was believed that the next semester would probably go smoother once the kinks were worked out.

Gail Gentry stated that people had said it was harder to link labs with classes if there was more than one lab. Gentry also added there was a conflict when professors taught dual classes at the same time, someone else could go in and book the room. Autumn McDaniel commented that the Registrar’s office appreciated any concerns given, they take them to Coursedog management to have the problems worked out. Screenshots of a problem were helpful, it was not always something that could be fixed on campus but a software flaw. Starkey stated that if you did have problems with Coursedog to reach out to Brandi Fletcher or Brittany Copley for the class scheduling and to Emily Vaughn for the event scheduling. You may also email Registrar@tntech.edu and it will get passed on.

Starkey mentioned that there was concern with Time Clock Plus – staff could not pull a report on hourly students after they were no longer working. Example: an hourly student who worked till the end of August, staff could not pull the hours they worked on Time Clock Plus for September payroll dates. Starkey read a reply from Jennifer Roberts, Payroll Director, which mentioned how to find total hours paid and that payroll record keeping could be found in Banner. Donna Schrock would e-mail her reply to the committee. Roberts also mentioned that staff can contact the Payroll Office to run a report for a time period in question.

McClain was given a card for her retirement and thanked everyone, she spoke on how important it was to continue to treat people with kindness. President Oldham thanked McClain for all she had done for so many students.

Amanda Ramsey motioned to adjourn. Gilmore seconded. Adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

Documents on file:

Agenda, September 21, 2023
Minutes, April 20, 2023
Retreat Evaluation