
Ex-officio: Meryl St. John, Staff Council Administrator

Members Absent: Kristen Cella, Monica Devino, Lyndelle LeBruin, Bill Valliere

Also Participating: Gary Derr, Vice President for Executive Operations and Amy Gilman, Staff Council Assistant and audience members: Marilyn Eldred, Jane Hendley, Zhanna Gordon

Call to Order

Karmen Swim called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Call for New Topics

None at this time.

Approve Draft Minutes from March 2017 Council Meeting

A motion was made to approve the March 7, 2017 Council minutes. One line edit was made. With no discussion and one abstention, the minutes were adopted.

Committee Updates – Committee Chairs & Vice Chairs

CBB – The committee is already engaging in strategic planning for next fall. At the April meeting the group discussed industry numbers, actual local cost of living, and how research into these numbers might be helpful going into next year.

Outreach – The March meeting was cancelled due to the snowstorm and University closing. The committee will work on confirming final details for the public forum. The focus of the forum topic may include merit pay and the performance evaluation process.

PPD - Final touches were made on the memo regarding parking issues and it is scheduled to go to the relevant administrators in the next two weeks. PPD will commence work on the central professional development funding pool at their next meeting.
Social – Skate Night took place last Friday evening. This coming weekend discounted pre-purchased ticket holders will enjoy 9-5: The Musical, presented by the Lyric Theatre. The Committee is encouraging teams to form for the VT Corporate Cup. Teams that register with the Staff Council Office will get a UVM team shirt and access to this year’s newly added free bus transport to and from the race. All planning for summer events is underway: Lake Monsters Game in June, Discounted Champlain Valley Fair tickets, and the Golf Outing in late July.

Discussion on FY18 Non-Represented Staff Salary Increase Numbers, Guidelines, and Staff Council’s Response – Karmen Swim, SC President

Karmen recapped the FY18 Wage and Salary Increase communication from Wanda Heading-Grant’s email dated April 3, 2017. Karmen shared with the Council and audience members a brief PowerPoint about what parts of this announcement Staff Council was able to and not able to influence. The major element the council could not control was the actual numbers. Karmen presented a brief review of how salary numbers are determined and the major allocations of University’s general fund (of which employee compensation and benefits is by far the majority expense).

The Council was able to suggest, encourage, or influence: dean’s approval or reconsideration for merit, transparency in the process and how the numbers were determined, improved definitions of how merit is earned and connected to performance appraisals, improved materials and communications to the staff, and removal of compression from any merit considerations. The presentation shared what factors influenced the overall UVM budget and also discussed that further movement was made around merit, although not still not the numbers that feel meritorious. At this point in the meeting the floor opened to representatives to share some statements/questions from their units.

Here are a few of the concerns that representatives brought from their areas:

- Merit shouldn’t be utilized until the process has fully evolved, it should be kept across the board until the process and appropriate trainings are complete.
- Not sure why UVM’s salary numbers are being based on national numbers when Burlington and Chittenden County’s cost of living is almost 20% higher than national figures. Military members get a higher differential if they live in this area over national numbers.
- Feedback that the actual “cost” of figuring the merit, getting approval from the Dean, updating the salary/payroll percentages, etc, the actual staff time to complete the process is more of a drain than what is ultimately earned via merit.
- Do faculty go through similar processes?
- Why is merit such a small amount of money?
- There is insufficient transparency about how merit is allocated – is half a percent available for discretion for every staff member, or is there only available merit for some?
- Merit should be based on performance appraisals thereby driving the use of performance appraisals process. What impact is this having? How many departments are now doing appraisals compared to Staff Council’s original research on this issue three and four years ago? Does the merit process help the performance appraisal rate among departments?
• There was greater collaboration with Staff Council and CBB committee with HRDMA prior to the announcement this year that did not take place last year. Another positive point is 1.5% was an improvement over 1% last year for across the board. However feedback from Staff Council last year was that merit is simply too low to create a “culture of merit.”
• Last year the increases were tiered and the rationale used was to be ‘more socially responsible’ to those making those lower salaries. There was no information or feedback to CBB or Staff Council this year that those tiers would no longer be in place.
• After announcements of salary increases this low, folks lose faith and are discouraged. The merit being so small feels like “what’s the point?” They were encouraged by the clear communication that CBB shared with HRDMA and that some info was taken however the recommendation was not to be “buffet style”. If you simply pick and choose you defeat the overall end result. This rep was disappointed to see the tiers were gone, with no conversation or explanation. Did the Council overshare works in progress with staff? Did the salary recommendation create a false expectation – even without talking specific numbers?
• A rep asked if the President is all about merit and if he truly supports it, why approve such a small amount?
• A rep reported that in a staff meeting that morning the dean discussed the memo and shared that some will get an increase and many won’t. This information was shared with the group before all of the department appraisals were completed. Karmen reminded the group that the dean will have to defend or support those that get the merit increases.
• Will health/medical/dental/parking cost share go up this year? Is there a difference between what the represented vs non-represented will receive? For example, if we get 1.5% across the board and then those benefits cost-shares increase sometimes they could be more or even with the raise received on July 1. The benefit piece happens in November. Is that even taken into consideration?
• The topic was raised about parity with the represented groups. The Council does not currently have a formal position regarding parity. It could be something the committee researches. This can work to either a benefit or a detriment for non-represented staff.
• Staff member got feedback that they appreciated the transparency in the memo, however they didn’t know what compression was and it wasn’t defined within the memo. Going forward, it would be helpful to define any word that a lay employee might not fully understand.

**Public Comment Period**

• One staff member got merit raise last year based on excellence. Do you stop being ‘excellent’? Will the same few always get the merit? This might be where the department/dean level examines who were the exceptional performers.
• The staff member said not all non-represented staff got merit in her department last year and the department did base it on performance appraisals. Someone who got it last year was asked to “tone it down” since they probably would not be able to get merit again the next year. The staff member reiterated that the entire practice is so subjective and encouraged that the supervisory training be mandatory.
The staff member felt that the announcement happening the day before the Staff Council meeting was poor timing. More time in between the two events would have allowed more people to attend the meeting. Karmen clarified that there was no say or control of when HRDMA sent the memo and the Staff Council meeting happens the 1st Tuesday of the month regardless of circumstances, so there was nothing purposeful around the timing.

**Other Business**

Meryl reminded our representatives that if their current term is up June 30, 2017 and they received her email inquiry as to whether they want to sign up for another term or run for an election in their unit/division/college, we would really appreciate hearing from them sooner than later as elections will be getting underway in April. Please let the Staff Council Office know as soon as possible. Additionally if you know of someone that might want to serve in one of the areas currently seeking representation please pass their name along and the Staff Council Office staff are happy to reach out.

**Adjournment**

Karmen asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded. Meeting adjourned at 1:25pm.