

UVM Staff Council Meeting Minutes

April 7, 2020

12:05-1:30 p.m.

Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

Members Present:

Heather Allard, Brendan Andrews, Tatiana Andrievskaya, Barbara Asimwe, Bob Bolyard, Kristen Cella, Laura Clayton, Aimee Gale, Caleb Gilbert, Christa Hagan-Howe, Katherine Hall, Nick Hall, Nichole Hathaway, Mindy Kear, Cindy Lee, Stephanie Loscalzo, Deb McAdoo, Jennifer O'Donnell, Holly Pedrini, Shirley Pine, Katrina Preiss, Jon Reisenweaver, Allison Spain, Donna Stevens, Bridget Tully, Lacey Ure, Ken Viglucci, Cheryl Herrick, Jay LaShombe, Stephen Lunna, Claire McCollough, Michael O'Sullivan, Erin Wertlieb, Bethany Wolfe

Members Absent:

Miriam Harrison, Alex Howe, Katherine Spence

Staff:

Elisabeth Blair, Alan Shashok

Guests:

Jes Kraus

Gary Derr

Yuliya Cruz

Gioia Thompson

Lee Diamond

Gwen Landis

Maia Hanron

Jackie Bruning

Amanda Hannaford

Emily T

Call to Order

President Stephen Lunna called the meeting to order at 12:05.

Approve Draft Minutes

March minutes were approved.

Q & A with Jes Kraus of HRDMA

Q: Is there a formal requirement for documentation for using EPSL or emergency sick leave?

A: No, there is not currently any formal documentation, as it's a bad idea to go out right now to get papers signed.

Q: Is the University considering layoffs or furloughs?

A: At this time, it is not part of the discussion right now, but there are too many unknowns right now about what the financial picture will look like going forward, the timeline for resumption of "normal" operations, and how the incoming class will look in the fall.

Q: Can you speak about the reporting form?

A: UVM's Emergency Operations group has a reporting form to be filled out if anyone is identified as being sick or at risk. It is intended to track health risks on campus.

Q: Will HRDMA reevaluate the question of instituting a central bank of sick time?

A: For now, employees have additional leave available to them right now for COVID-19 related reasons. It's possible there will be a consideration of a pool but it would be a decision made by UVM administration, rather than HRDMA.

Q: Will there be additional emergency leave policies put into place if this continues longer than 1-2 months?

A: Right now we're dealing with the short-term, making sure that staff have leave available to use for sickness or for childcare or other needs. We do need a longer-term solution but that depends on how long this goes on and what the picture looks like a month or two from now.

Q: Can you advise on flexible scheduling and how supervisors should handle it?

A: Supervisors are encouraged to be as flexible as possible, especially with telework. It's unreasonable to expect that people are glued to their computer from 8:30-4, and HRDMA has stressed that to supervisors. If there are any questions on specific issues, send them to Labor and Employee Relations (LER) at uvmrer@uvm.edu, or to HRSinfo@uvm.edu and it will be re-routed to the appropriate person.

Q: What happens if staff are called back for work and students are still not in school and camps are out?

A: The need to care for children will not be viewed as having to do with only schools and not camps. The leave is available through Dec 31st.

Q: It's a pay cut to take advantage of the Families First act – what options are there?

A: You can use the leave intermittently on a weekly basis but you cannot break up the hours of a single day -- you must use full day increments. This means you can use it a few days a week and either telework or substitute your own leave balances for other days. That can get you closer to a normal salary.

Please note that if you are using it not for childcare but because you are sick with COVID-19, then you have to use the whole two weeks, or until you are no longer sick (whichever is shorter) and thus can't use it intermittently.

Q: Once an employee reports in the online EOG form that they have symptoms or a diagnosis, Nancy Carney will follow up with them?

A: Each academic or administrative unit has their own liaison working with the Emergency Operations Group for that purpose. Nancy works with the Center for Health and Wellbeing to assist with doing social tracking for employees. The follow-ups are done to make sure the employee is okay and so that we can be updated on their current status. For example, if someone who is awaiting test results has been on campus in the last 14 days, there may be a need to follow up with any contacts they made, should their test results come back positive.

Q: Can new mothers who have already taken FMLA now take the emergency sick leave?

A: There are two forms of leave, both under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act or FFCRA. The first kind is Emergency Paid Sick Leave or EPSL – 80 hrs or two weeks of emergency sick leave. Depending on what it's used for it can be 100% of pay or 67% if you're caring for a child. This is not amending any former act, and is a standalone, completely new form of leave.

The other form of leave is the Public Health Emergency Leave or PHEL – this is a total of 12 weeks, with the first two weeks being your own sick leave or or the EPSL two weeks of emergency sick leave. The PHEL amends the Family and Medical Leave Act or FMLA, which means that technically, employees

who have already used those FMLA benefits for maternity leave can't use it because they will have exhausted it.

HRDMA is looking into this issue, and Jes Kraus will communicate as soon as possible about whether this technicality will be regarded as a bar to taking new leave.

Q: One employee's last day was Friday and was given two weeks' severance, then has to use sick/vacation time until he's called back.

A: For some employees who are unable to telecommute and are not essential employees – especially in Custodial Services and in Physical Plant – right now those staff members have been told to please use the Emergency Paid Sick Leave, or their own sick leave. Thus the two weeks is the emergency paid sick leave and not a severance pay. With questions on specific situations, email HRInfo@uvm.edu.

Q: Is the intermittent leave taxable income?

A: Yes. Just like a normal paycheck.

Q: If the governor extends the Stay Home Stay Safe Order, will an expanded pool of ESPL be available for employees unable to work from home?

A: We do not know. We're hoping for more answers in the next several weeks and will share as soon as we have any answers with regards to longer term plans.

Q: Where is the best place to get a recap of all the information you have just covered?

A: Wanda Heading-Grant has sent a memo out that's an overview of the leave, and it's on the HR website. There are also a bunch of FAQ that are employee-specific. If you go to the HR front page → COVID 19 Resources. And they also are included on the Emergency Operations COVID-19 virus website.

Q: If we're working from home, is there a choice between what we can use, sick leave or vacation?

A: If you're home and able to telework, and you're working as you normally would, and if you want to take leave, you can take one of the normal types of leave (either vacation or sick leave). But if you're home with kids whose school is closed and you're dealing with the direct result of COVID-19, then you can use any form of leave that you want, including the new forms of leave we've covered here.

Gary Derr answered two further questions:

Q: Are staff going to continue to be charged for parking during this time?

A: Steve Lunna has reached out to Parking & Transportation

Q: Is UVM going to require staff to wear surgical masks if they are working on campus?

A: The Governor and the Commissioner of Health are recommending the use of masks, but are not requiring it. We are making disposable face masks available to those employees who must do their work on campus and they'll begin using them tomorrow (Wednesday 4/8/20). It is strongly encouraged, but it is not a requirement. That may change in the near future and if so that'd be the Governor changing that.

Standing Committee Updates

PPD – They last met on February 18th. They do have an exit interview survey letter that has been submitted to Jim Vigoreaux for review before bringing it to the Staff Council Executive Committee. Telecommuting is another topic that they've worked on.

Social Committee – Skate Night was on Friday March 6th and it went well – 60 people attended. We did cancel Red Sox bus trip. Lyric Theatre’s *Matilda* has been rescheduled to Sunday July 12th. The Chinese cooking class has been cancelled, though the Committee has reached out to the chef regarding possibly doing an online cooking class. The Vermont Corporate Cup has been rescheduled to September. Elisabeth still needs donations of swag for that. June 28th is still the hopeful date of the Lake Monsters game. The golf outing will take place at Links at Lang Farm on August 7th, but the contract has yet to be signed because it is unexpectedly complicated.

Community Engagement – We have not met, but have been corresponding with Elisabeth to assist her with her weekly mailings that she’s been doing.

CBB – Met on March 12, discussed survey, sampling, and updated the committee on telecommuting, and the work done on expanding benefits for LGBTQA staff. A non-Staff Council group advocating for the establishment of a sick leave pool wants Staff Council’s support, but the last meeting of CBB did not have enough people in attendance to make a decision. They are meeting again Thursday.

Caylin McCamp – Education and Outreach Coordinator, Office of Sustainability

She gave a presentation on sustainability at UVM, stressing a broad definition of the term that encompasses economic, environmental, and community sustainability. She detailed the results of the campus Sustainability Culture Survey. She also spoke about UVM’s performance within STARS categories and gave an overview of how Staff Council might be able to contribute to UVM earning more points.

One way would be to support sustainable investment with a resolution. Right now, there is a push to divest from fossil fuels, and the Student Government Association, the Graduate Student Association, and Faculty Senate have all put forth statements saying they support this. Staff Council might consider pursuing putting together their own such statement.

She spoke about Sustainability Ambassadors as well. These are staff who share information about sustainability activities, forward a newsletter to their areas, participate in programs, encourage habits in the office, and identify ideas for enhancing sustainability, with an emphasis on making healthy choices the easiest choices. Currently there are 11 units represented. Participation requires just 1 hour/month.

Other ideas for individuals right now include test riding your bike to work while traffic is low, reducing your family’s food waste, composting (July 1st begins mandatory household composting), growing your own food, sharing seeds with neighbors, and buying CSA farm shares.

Officers’ Update

Leadership Meeting with Gary Derr – Friday, March 20, 2020

Much of the meeting was about the COVID-19 pandemic and how it would affect staff on- and off-campus. There was still a lot of information that wasn’t known at the time of the meeting. Much of the latest info shared on the COVID-19 website has come out since this meeting.

We also discussed Staff Council elections and whether or not to delay them. It was decided to continue with the process as scheduled. Also discussed were options for holding regularly scheduled Staff Council meetings online.

Also on the agenda was the salary increase recommendation – it has been put on hold. On April 6th, 2020 the Board of Trustees approved a short-term, emergency budget for the next 3 months and has deferred a full budget approval until we are out of the pandemic.

HRDMA Leadership Meeting – Monday, March 23, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects were one of the main topics of discussion. Jes Kraus was asked to present and offer feedback to Staff Council on policies and procedures for staff at the next full Staff Council meeting on April 7th.

It was confirmed with HRDMA that salary issues are on hold for the time being.

Based on a request from CBB, there was discussion about a “Retirement Loophole” regarding early retirement and associated UVM contributions to retirement benefits. Jes Kraus asked for more information on whether the reported situation is a “one-off” or if there is a pattern.

Also discussed were exit interviews and an information request from PPD. Jes Kraus will respond with the information that was requested.

Transportation & Parking

Steve Lunna reached out to Transportation and Parking with regards to parking continuing to be charged to faculty and staff accounts who are working from home. They responded that accounts will continue to be charged, and that this decision came directly from the VP of Finance. If there are any updates, T&P will advise the campus. Steve will continue to engage with T&P on this issue.

Subcommittee Reports

Nomination Committee

The Committee stressed that there is still a need for nominations for officer positions.

Other Business

No other business.

Public Comment Period

No public comments were brought to the Council.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 PM.