

University Staff Advisory Council February 13, 2001 Meeting Notes

Location: Sarratt, room 189 Time: 8:30am - 10:00am

People in attendance: John Brassil (president), Phil McGovern (vice president), Hilary Forbes (secretary), Dorris Baker, Pam Bergeron, Jo Bilyeu, Faye Binkley, Lauren Brisky, Tammy Boclair, Jeana Carlock, Betsy Carroll, Beth Clark, Bill Corbin, Teri Creech, Karen Cunningham, Susan Davis, Mary Demarest, Karen Dolan, Mary Lou Edgar, Lola Fitzpatrick, Deborah Hightower, Cyndy Hinton, Janet Hirt, Tanish Horner, Barbara Horton, Kathy Jantz, Sue King, Mary Lange, Kathy Morris Lessley, Darlene Lewis, Mary Lucas, Rita Majors, Patricia Marett, Rebecca Massey, Brenda McKee, Richard Murray, Anna Parish, David Price, Bill Randles, Sheri Reynolds, Gwen Simpkins, Terrie Spetalnick, Debra Stephens-Quarles, Judy Thompson, F. Clark Williams, Jr., Sandra Winters, and Maureen Writesman.

Regrets: Nancy Jackson.

Call to Order: John Brassil called the meeting to order at 8:30am. The minutes for the December meeting were approved. The minutes for the January meeting were approved with changes.

Presentations: Chancellor Chancellor Gee attended today's USAC meeting. He shared a few of his thoughts which began with his interest in coming to the USAC meetings at least once each semester. He mentioned that he and senior management are involved in an on-going discussions about how to work together to make a difference. They are on a roll with lots of momentum, but they can do even better. He wants to develop a sense of community where people talk to each other not about each other. Our community should take pride in the accomplishments of all of us. Our community should take joy in the opportunities here.

In corporate American businesses are annually recognized for being a "Family Friendly" workplace. A similar award is not currently given within institutions of higher education. Chancellor Gee would like us to think about how Vanderbilt can be more "Family Friendly."

Chancellor Gee talked about making those things that can happen possible. He does not want to support a "can't do that because we don't do that here" attitude. He admitted that along the way of trying new ideas we may fail or make mistakes. Yet, he looks at these mis-steps as stumbles forward rather than stumbles backward.

Chancellor Gee attempts to meet with staff on a regular basis by hosting breakfasts to learn about our concerns. He admits that some issues can be solved immediately, but that other may require more long range planning. He would like to help us understand what is happening and will publish a little newsletter to participants of these breakfast groups (and include the USAC) every four to five months. Chancellor Gee welcomed all of us to visit him and help him understand how to reach out to everyone in our community.

Chancellor Gee discussed some topics that he thinks would encourage and support change at

Vanderbilt. * abPost retirement healthcare - to eliminate fear of retirement. * abTuition benefit plan - to support further education of staff and encourage them to remain at Vanderbilt. * abProfessional development - to nurture and grow our current staff. * abFamily friendly policy - to support extended bereavement leave and sick leave to care for family. * abTrust and Responsibility between staff and senior management - to ensure that Vanderbilt can trust you to do what is right and staff trusts that Vanderbilt will support them. This will be further developed when the concept of Simplified Operating Systems - SOP - has fully reviewed the current systems of business to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy. * abListening and Understanding - to encourage "we, the senior administration" to listen to, understand, and take staff seriously. This would change a current view of us v. them, to we - an entire Vanderbilt community.

After these comments, Chancellor Gee invited questions from USAC. Q. One University, but that includes the hospital and the university, and forcing everyone to do what the hospital does is not reasonable. A. He discussed how to bring the entire University together by understanding the complexities, acknowledging the parallels in systems, and creating an overall philosophy. We also need to realize the challenge of the hospital being the largest teaching laboratory within Vanderbilt, but it is also the most vulnerable.

Q. Can we combine grant management offices to save time and the need for 11 signatures on grant applications? A. Chancellor Gee talked about eliminating bureaucracy so that 11 signatures are not needed on a grant application. Lauren Brisky concurred on this matter and stressed that this is a compelling issue because of the University wide goal to support interdisciplinary research.

Q. Negotiating funds from school to school to support the library is a real struggle. What can be done to change/improve this? A. Chancellor Gee is currently holding conversations with the deans of each school/college about financial issues. Vanderbilt's ETOB system appears to have created some economic barriers to education. He does not suggest destroying that system, but rather inserting new ideas to make it work/move less like an elephant and more like a ballerina.

Q. How do you feel about the end of the year spend it or lose it concept. Is this still the policy or has it been updated? A. Deans actually control this policy and it is at their discretion that it governs your budget.

Q. Kirkland hall is not a comfort zone for most staff. There is not a real moat, but an imaginary one that supports an ivory tower image. What do you think about this? A. Chancellor Gee said he works with and for us. We don't work for him. He does not support a notion of hierarchy.

Q. How can the wall be brought down between the University and Hospital? A. Chancellor Gee suggested that it can start at his level by fully understanding the issues of each side. He believes that top change can trickle down so all staff can help to bring down this wall.

Q. It is hard to move around Vanderbilt and people are topping out for raises after being here for many years, so many people are leaving. What can be done about this? A. Chancellor Gee admitted that this topic has been raised by other staff and he will make every effort to examine and change this system.

Statements were shared with Chancellor Gee. Richard Murray particularly appreciated Chancellor Gee's comments about reviewing our tuition benefits because when he worked at another institution it was the tuition benefits program that changed his life. Another person mentioned that Chancellor Gee has already made a difference by backing up his words with actions. Chancellor Gee followed that with saying he wants to be part of a we that is about substance, not symbolism.

Nurseline - Barbara Holton from Human Resource Services Optum Nurseline is a new benefit to Vanderbilt staff and their family members. You will be issued a PIN number to access this resource. It is a 1-800 phone line that gives you a live person or library that answers questions about health issues, medical issues, and drug & pharmaceutical issues. This system is used by many to prepare them for check-up visits; to help them decide whether to schedule an office visit or make a trip to the emergency room; to answer questions for new parents; to answer questions about weight loss and nutrition, to follow a diagnosis, to provide patients with information about drugs.

Committee Reports:

Benefits Committee - Terrie Spetalnick

The Benefits Committee received a presentation about how much benefits actually cost Vanderbilt. The top three expenses are 1) health care, 2) retirement, and 3) tuition. You will soon receive in the mail a form that details your total compensation as an employee. Terrie facilitated two focus group for staff and faculty to discuss their thoughts and opinions about benefits. More staff participated in the discussions. The input from all participants was truly appreciated. The Benefits Office is surveying peer institutions and local business to learn what they offer. The next Benefits meeting is the last Wednesday of February.

Traffic and Parking - F. Clark Williams, Jr.

Francis Kovac in the new manager of Traffic and Parking.

Special Events - No meeting

Executive Committee - Phil McGovern

The Executive Committee (EC) discussion centered around the review of new or changed HR policies and procedures. Several advantages of the EC review were discussed. 1) Coming to the EC when the policy is still in draft form provides HR an early test of the policy's merits and logistics -- an early "run through" to get an indication of overall receptiveness among staff. 2) Members of the Staff Council and EC possess expertise in different functions of the University that can be used to benefit the development and implementation of the proposed policy. 3) Maximize the effectiveness of the policy at the formulation stage. 4) Identify any possible unintended consequences and help identify implementation issues.

Also discussed were some preliminary internal concerns regarding the whos and hows of the Committee's review. Some of these thoughts included: 1) Could establish a subcommittee of the Staff Council tasked with the policy review and coordination. 2) The scope must be defined - no need to review every change made to a policy or to look at every new or changed job description,

for example. 3) Perhaps the proposed policies should go directly to the full Council. 4) At the very least, the policies should come to the council or EC when they go to the DDD list mailing. 5) Need to follow-up with Vice Chancellor Brisky.

The next EC meeting is February 22 at 11:30am in the Hill Center. Darlene Lewis will be at this meeting.

New Business:

Betsy Carroll introduced the following recommendation to USAC. Between the February and March meetings USAC will take this recommendation back to constituents for feedback and input. It will be voted on at the March meeting.

RECOMMENDATION ON STAFF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

University Staff Advisory Council advocates an emphasis on staff career development to enhance the effectiveness of Vanderbilt staff and to improve employment retention. Too often staff feel that leaving Vanderbilt for better opportunities is the only way to advance their careers. The resulting turnover is expensive for Vanderbilt because replacement staff must be recruited and because services may be adversely affected by staff vacancies. We encourage the following changes so that more Vanderbilt staff can enjoy professional fulfillment in addition to the other rewards of being part of the Vanderbilt family:

Provide structural support for career development within Vanderbilt by creating career ladders for all job families, streamlining the job reclassification process, and facilitating support of internal job transfers.

Offer tuition assistance that would lower financial barriers to staff wishing to earn a post-secondary or post-baccalaureate degree while continuing employment at Vanderbilt.

Increase commitment to in-house training and professional development programs for staff at all organizational levels and across all disciplines.

Provide supervisors and managers the skills and support for enhancing their employees' career development, and make them responsible for doing so.

Uniformly administer an annual cycle of performance development and evaluation in which employees and their supervisors agree in advance on concrete descriptions of duties and expected performance, how performance will be measured, and appropriate ways to review progress during the year.

Announcements:

A Susan Gray School Fundraiser -

Parisian is hosting a Celebrate Education: A Day of Shopping to Raise Money for Education on March 2 from 7:00am to 9:00pm. Please contact Shawna Ropp for tickets and information at MRL, room 405A, 322-8235, or shawna.ropp@vanderbilt.edu.

Meeting Adjourned: The meeting ended at 10:00am. The next staff council meeting is Tuesday, March 13 in Sarratt 189.