

University Staff Advisory Council

November 9, 1999 Minutes

Media Interview Room * Memorial Gym

Minutes taken and prepared by Tammy Bocclair, USAC Secretary

Present:

Terrie Spetalnick (President), John Brassil (Vice-President), Tammy Bocclair (Secretary), Kathy Morris (Group 1), Vi Prosser (Group 1), Pam Bergeron (Group 3), Mercy Eyadiel (Group 4), Phillip McGovern (Group 5), Tanish Horner (Group 5), Donna Bissell (Group 6), Hope Anderson-Horton (Group 6), Teri Creech (Group 7), Dawn Chanaca (Group 7), Judy Thompson (Group 9), Chris Poindexter (Group 10), Mary Lucas (Group 11), Bill Corbin (Group 12), Karen Cunningham (Group 12), Jessica Guenther (Group 13), Brenda McKee (Group 14), Michael Doty (Group 15), Mary Lou Edgar (Group 16), Sue Davis (Group 18), Jo Bilyeu (Group 19), Lola Fitzpatrick (Group 20), Eric Dye (Group 21), Rhonda Laird (Group 22), Sue King (Group 23), Karen Dolan (Group 24), Beth Clark (Group 25), Debbie Whelan (Group 25), Jeff Compher (Group 26), Randy Johnson (Group 26), Deborah Hightower (Group 29), Matt Scanlan (Group 29), Sheila Dunnells (Group 31), Willa Dean Martin (Group 31), Shore Griffin (Group 33) Ex-Officio: Ginny Featherston, Jeannie Rice, James Taylor

Regrets:

Shannon Richardson (Group 8), Maureen Writesman (Group 15), Corinne Bickman (Group 17), Liz Cermak (Group 21), Andrew Atwood (Group 27), Sheila Warf (Group 32), Anna Parish (Group 32), Lauren Briskey (ex-officio), Elaine Goleski (ex-officio)

Groups Not Represented: 2, 8, 17, 27, 28, 30, 32

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Agreement on a resolution on Vanderbilt's Friday after Thanksgiving Policy
- An understanding of Vanderbilt's updated policy on discharge
- An understanding of Vanderbilt's updated policy recruiting and hiring.
- A look-see at the renovated Memorial Gym.

CALL TO ORDER

USAC President Terrie Spetalnick called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. She welcomed everyone to the Media Interview Room and asked them to sign the Sign-up Sheets.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Sue King moved to dispense with the reading of the October minutes, Teri Creech second. Brenda McKee moved to accept the minutes; Willa Dean Martin second. The minutes were approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee (John Brassil, john.brassil@vanderbilt.edu)

Two things were discussed in the Executive Committee Meeting:

1. How to get the USAC mentioned in the staff orientation

2. Day After Thanksgiving Policy

Question: Why is it difficult to get the USAC mention in the staff orientation

Answer: The long and short of it is that the people organizing the staff orientation do not want to include it. They are trying to reduce handouts. The orientation is a really busy time with a lot of information being given out. It may benefit us to pursue other ways (other Human Resource classes, etc.). They (Human Resources) were not totally unreceptive to the idea, they just felt like that was a bad time for it.

There was a comment about how the orientation process was perceived as too much Vanderbilt information and not enough about benefits. John Brassil commented that Phil McGovern sat through an orientation session. He then said that as an advisory council, it may be worth it to send someone back to the orientation session and take detailed notes and maybe offer some advice to the folks who run the program.

Bereavement (Karen Dolan, dolan@vuse.vanderbilt.edu))

Karen Dolan attended the first joint bereavement committee meeting with the Medical Center and USAC. What has initiated this again is an employee had a grandmother, father, uncle pass away within 18 months. You have three days per year for each bereavement and you can also take vacation days, but no "sick" days. Currently, an uncle is not covered in the Bereavement Policy. (USAC members were given a handout which included the memo that sparked the formation of this committee, a chart of comparable schools bereavement policies, a list of what the number system on the chart stands for, and the actual Bereavement Leave policy from the Human Resources web site). Karen asked that the members ask their groups the following questions:

1. Should we receive more days bereavement leave than we currently do?
2. Should the family members defined for bereavement leave be changed to include the expanded list?
3. Should the policy say "You WILL be asked by your supervisor to provide certification..." instead of MAY?
4. Should sick days be allowed as bereavement days instead of just vacation days?
5. Anything else you would like to address.

Please get the results back to Karen by Nov. 19 for her next committee meeting

Question: Has Human Resources been involved?

Answer: No - this is an initiative of the USAC.

Ginny Featherston pointed out that the policy will have to be amended due to domestic partners so this is probably a good time to look at the overall equity of the policy. It is a staff driven initiative at this point.

Special Events (Ginny Featherston, virginia.featherston@vanderbilt.edu)

The University Staff Service Awards was a great event. We gave out lovely gifts for 20 years of service and over. The gifts were personally delivered by members of the staff council. The

Medical Center Service Awards are tomorrow (Nov. 10). We are planning to use the same caterer for the Holiday Celebration (Dec. 13). We are going to try the party without families again. If you have any ideas or opinions for what you would like to see at the event, let one of the SEC members know.

Question: How did the survey go?

Answer: The general consensus was if you can't improve the food and gifts and get rid of the kids running around, then just give us a turkey. So we are going to try to improve those items and make it a holiday celebration for Vanderbilt staff and faculty. Not a party for the families.
Terrie Spetalnick: The social gathering was much preferred over just getting a gift, but only if done right.

Question: How do we encourage departments to let their employees go to the party.

Answer: A lot of departments have its own parties, so they do not promote the overall party.

Terrie Spetalnick: How do we encourage participation?

Responses: USAC emails, fliers, posters, start a tradition that employees get pictures with Santa

- Please communicate your ideas to the Special Events Committee we will be sure that everyone will get fliers and posters soon. - The mailing will be campus mail.
- The Holiday Celebration is Dec. 13 (Monday) from 2:30 - 5:30 pm in the Stadium Club - there will be a conscientious effort to have the food replenished throughout the party

Staff Tuition Benefits Committee (Mary Lucas (mary.lucas@vanderbilt.edu))

Ad Hoc Committee on Tuition Benefit for Staff has been formed and will be chaired by Mary Lucas. Other members are Hilary Forbes, Tanish Horner, and Barbara Kindt. The committee's charge is to explore and propose recommendations for change to the policy on tuition assistance for staff seeking post-secondary degrees.

Benefits Committee (Terrie Spetalnick, terrie.spetalnick@vanderbilt.edu)

The following items were reported at the 27 October meeting:

- About 7,600 of 13,000 Open Enrollment forms were returned to the Benefits Office (nearly 60%).
- The 1999 Benefits Fair was attended by about 2,200 employees.
- About 35 employees registered domestic partners, but not all of those signed up for benefits for their domestic partners.
- A program is in the testing phase that will enable employees to check benefits online using their VUnet ID and password for identification.
- These subcommittees will gear up in January: Long Term Care Insurance, Group Auto/Home Insurance, Short Term Disability Insurance, Legal Services.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Faculty/Staff Basketball Tickets (Karen Dolan)

Question: How can we be taxed for half price tickets as a perq and the general public gets the same tickets for the same price and is not taxed?

Answer: The faculty/staff can buy the half-price basketball tickets for \$133 in the 3rd level of the endzone and NOT be taxed. They can also buy those tickets for only \$67 and be taxed.

The half-price tickets for faculty/staff on the SECOND level are sold to faculty/staff for \$133 and those tickets are taxable.

The faculty/staff are getting a much better selection of seats than the general public.

NEW BUSINESS

- A Resolution on Vanderbilt's Friday after Thanksgiving Policy

It is too late to change the policy for this Thanksgiving

Ginny Featherston stated that we want to change the policy so that it is not the staff member that has to pay for the day that management decides to close, but that management has to pay for the day it chooses to close.

A lengthy discussion followed, some of the points made follow:

- What we want is for the employee to have the choice on whether or not to work on that day.
- It was agreed that the USAC needs to come up with recommendations to this policy so it is not ignored.
- One option is to add a personal day - A suggestion was offered that we not give up on the idea of making it a holiday. It may be the only fair thing.
- The recommendation to make it a holiday is fine, but that cannot be our complete recommendation.
- Labor Day is considered a holiday. People who work that day (nonexempt) get the pay differential and a day off at a time that is mutually agreeable with the supervisor within 90 days. For many people, that day is the day after Thanksgiving.
- The point we are trying to make that someone else makes the decision to close and then we have to spend a paid day off. This is not uniform university-wide. It is usually a departmental choice.
- At Peabody, it is left up to the dean, not the department. It has turned into a "security" issue because the university does not want to be held accountable.

Terrie Spetalnick then suggested that the USAC gather data on what is happening in our departments and point out the ways the current policy has been implemented. It may not be the way it was intended. We will table this discussion until the next meeting. The policy now says the department may decide whether or not to close on Thanksgiving.

POLICY #HR-015, Discharge (James Taylor, presenter)

The policy is located at the following address:

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/HRS/policies/discharge.htm>

Questions/Answers and Points of Interest During the Presentation

- Always contact Human Resources before taking Discharge Action
- If a person leaves Vanderbilt for any reason, their VUNet ID is still active for four months. If someone is fired or released - the supervisor can request that ACIS or a VUNet Services Administrator cut off that service.
- The campus does not have a layoff policy like the Medical Center.

On Website Usage:

Concern: It is very hard to conduct a search on the browser without sometimes getting inappropriate information. Please make supervisors aware of this problem.

Response: There has to be a pattern of unauthorized use. You will not be discharged because you accidently got into something inappropriate.

Question: Is there a "Big Brother" giving a report?

Answer: No

Response: If you pull up a website offensive to a coworker continuously, print it, and someone down the hall picks it up that is offended, that is going to get you in trouble.

Question: Where are the Harassment Policies?

Answer: Staff handbook addresses that on the website.

Question: Is there such a thing as "comp" time at Vanderbilt?

Answer: While we use the word "comp" time in our terminology, compensatory time does not truly exist for private employers as it does for Federal employees. At Vanderbilt, if hourly employees are required to work extra hours on a given workday, comp time off in lieu of overtime pay can be taken only in the current pay period and only with supervisory approval in advance. Details as outlined in the Staff Handbook are online at

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/HRS/hbook/payroll.htm#comp>.

On Initial Orientation:

- You only have one orientation period in your employment at Vanderbilt. If you are moving from one department to another, then you have access to the Grievance Process if you have completed the initial orientation period (3 months for non-exempt and 6 months for exempt).
- As long as an employee is in the orientation period, they do not have access to the Grievance Process.
- When you go from one job to another, you do have an orientation period as far as that job is concerned, but it is not your initial orientation.
- The Grievance Process is NOT available if the staff member chooses to resign even if the resignation is in lieu of a discharge.

POLICY #HR-017, Recruiting and Hiring Policy (James Taylor, presenter)

The policy is located at the following address:

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/HRS/policies/recruitandhire.htm>

Questions/Answers and Points of Interest During the Presentation

On Reference Checks:

Question: What exactly is a reference? A lot of people have stopped giving written references because they can get you in trouble.

Answer: The university policy for us giving out references - we give dates of employment, and positions held while at Vanderbilt. Normally, we do not keep good enough records about the staff performance and behavior on the job to be able to substantiate the type of reference that we give - that is the hangup.

Question: Who is responsible for paying accommodations for an interview?

Answer: I don't know - We'll check on that.

- Refer all employee verifications to Human Resources

NEXT STEPS

- Emergency Preparedness Policy will be discussed at the next meeting
- Continue to work on the Day After Thanksgiving Resolution

James Taylor announced that Bob Wheaton will be speaking on Environmental Safety Issues on November 10 from 11:30 am - 1 pm in Room 520 in Light Hall

President Terrie Spetalnick adjourned the meeting

Next USAC Meeting:

Tuesday, December 14, 8:30 am - Branscomb Private Dining Hall • Please send regrets to Tammy Boclair at tammy.boclair@vanderbilt.edu

MEETING EVALUATION

What Worked

Question and Answers were done in a timely manner

Stayed on Time

What we want to work on/change

Room was too Cold

The USAC then took a tour of the renovated Memorial Gym, including the Suites.