

UUP Albany Chapter Labor Management Meeting Notes September 23, 2014

Attendees:

Labor: B Benjamin, B Trachtenberg, T Hoey, R. Vives, J Harton, M Seidel

Management: B Hedberg, J Mancuso, C Trethaway, JD Hyde, T Mulcahy, J Van Voorst

1. DSA Proposal

UUP was disappointed that the Administration decided to return to merit as the sole criteria for discretionary allocations. Although there was a 2% raise across the board this year, DRP money is still taken out of paychecks and healthcare costs continue to rise. While some areas have a practice of faculty committee participating in reviews, this is not uniform across the U. We have concerns about the idea of merit, and would have preferred to see some across the board distributions like last year. We have pressing concerns, however, about inadequate mechanisms to evaluate the work of contingents. Merit cannot be assessed when there are no meaningful structures in place to evaluate the job performance of part-time faculty. SIRF scores are probably used most often, but are inadequate. Students should not be evaluating faculty; that is the role of faculty. Peer observations from other faculty, reviews of syllabi and assignments, reviews of grading, testimony from co-instructors all should be considered as methods of developing a much more robust evaluation process. Since the dedicated pool of DSA for part-timers is still quite new, not everyone understands contingents can be eligible. Some contingents falling through the cracks. UUP requests that management send reminders to departments about adjuncts' eligibility (previous rounds did not include part-timers, but the current contract commits funds to contingents). UUP suggested the Provost or HR consider emailing a message to chairs that if there is no mechanism to sufficiently evaluate merit of contingents, departments could consider giving across the board bonuses this time and by next year have a meaningful merit evaluation process in place. Management agreed to consider how best to communicate concerns about the evaluation of part-time faculty to Deans and Departments. The President has asked T Mulcahy to create a committee to look at issues around contingents, considering best practices elsewhere, ratios of full-time to part-time, evaluation processes, and have the committee develop recommendations by next year. UUP can help identify what else to incorporate in the committee's charge. B Hedberg will have rosters this week of who is eligible-(must be on the payroll this semester). Chair recommendations are due 10/15/14.

2. Performance Programs

In spring B Benjamin, K Trethaway and J Mancuso discussed increasing the percentage of current performance programs. As of 9/1/14 60% were current and more are coming in. There were some issues getting data input into the new system. Supervisors can now see information about employees who report directly to them, as well as information about when programs are due. Supervisor trainings are being considered, perhaps with areas of low return rates targeted first. It was suggested the training information be put online. UUP can also put information in its newsletter. UUP appreciates the efforts management has made to bring more supervisors into compliance.

3. Senior Leadership Evaluations

B Benjamin has had a series of conversations with disgruntled faculty regarding the University's decision to not disclose any results from the evaluations of Deans Wulfert and Bangert-Drowns. There is broad dissatisfaction. The perception, accurate or not, is that the University has chosen to shield administrators from negative feedback, disregarding faculty input. This was not what we understood to be the intention of these surveys. We have always recognized that this was a pilot process. But it was a pilot evaluation of two individual administrators and their performance as assessed by their peers with whom they work most closely, not an evaluation of a survey instrument

(as former Provost Phillips depicted in her message summarizing the University's assessment of the review process). Pilots designed to test surveys are not sent out broadly requesting potentially sensitive information from respondents. The fact that the evaluation process was being tried for the first time does not invalidate the results. Faculty and staff were asked for their input on the performance of senior leadership and many spent considerable time and effort filling out a lengthy survey. There was no indication that the results were to be kept confidential. In fact we understood from our discussions at Labor Management that the administration intended to develop a transparent evaluative process that valued employee input and incorporated that into a holistic, ongoing evaluation of senior leadership. President Jones had said faculty and staff would get meaningful feedback about the process to assure them that their input was taken seriously. But this does not seem to be the case. Initially there was some concern among employees that the survey was not confidential, that its questions would reveal respondents' identity. UUP worked with B Szelest to assure members that their identities would be kept confidential and gave UUP endorsement to the survey, encouraging all to participate. UUP now seems complicit in the process and faculty and staff are wary of participating in the future. UUP will be also be hesitant to support such endeavors in the future. We understand that personnel evaluations are confidential and should be used to discuss strengths and weaknesses with the individual being evaluated. However, this must be balanced with a transparent process if a management evaluation is going to have any credibility. To counter this perception UUP requests that management disclose a summary overview of the survey results in a manner that does not jeopardize the confidentiality of either respondents or the two Deans who were evaluated. T Mulcahy stated President Jones wants excellent communication, confidence and trust on campus and it is clear communication must be improved many places. Management understands the concerns, and will consider ways to ensure that faculty input is incorporated into its management reviews. Management assures UUP that faculty feedback was taken seriously, and that the pilot surveys will be used as a professional development tool for the two administrators who volunteered to be evaluated in this pilot. Management will consider the appropriate balance between confidential personnel matters and the need for transparent disclosure.

4. New Institutional Relationships with Albany Law, Downstate Medical College

At present MOUs are being considered for affiliations, joint ventures and collaborations. The President's long-term plans include increased offerings and diversity/breadth of what UAlbany offers through affiliation with these two institutions. There is no specific timeline. UAlbany's standing could be raised with the addition of law and medical schools. The former Provost's new role includes working with SUNY Downstate to determine how the schools can work more closely together. B Benjamin stated general support in principle for the idea of affiliations, but indicated that the campus community needs to be involved in this conversation and urged caution in light of the recent history with CNSE. T Mulcahy will share UUP's request for more communication.

5. Health and Safety

UUP thanked administration for installing handicap accessible doors by the Social Science loading dock and bus stop. These additional concerns were raised.

- a. **Paint from water tower:** Last summer paint from the water tower project was not contained appropriately and paint spray went into the air and over portions of campus. The paint damaged vehicles parked on campus. The U has been working with individuals regarding this. The chemical composition of this specialized paint also raises concerns about health risks. The incident affected a large number of employees and students. UUP asked if UAlbany had filed a PESH investigation to assess the impact of the incident, asking that the campus community be informed about the incident, and requested that the U issue a statement about the incident, including information about what steps employees and students should take in the event that they were affected. J Mancuso stated Lisa Donohue investigated and said there is little if any risk from the exposure. He indicated most employees did not know the paint was on their cars until

they were notified and nobody filed a legal claim (would have to go through small claims court and the construction company would be responsible, not the U). The U has been working behind the scenes to get issues resolved. J Mancuso said Kevin Wilcox indicated plant employees and parking management contacted individuals in affected areas. UUP is concerned the community was not informed. He will share concerns with K Wilcox.

- b. **Air intakes:** The week of 8/19/14 as students and families were coming to campus, an asbestos truck surrounded with caution tape was parked near an air intake to the Ion Beam Lab. UUP was alerted and contacted Environmental Health and Safety who provided air sampling results assuring UUP that there were no immediate health risks. Facilities indicate it would be too expensive to move the truck to reduce concerns. An air quality workshop in summer stressed there are chronic problems when air intakes are at ground level and there have been many ongoing issues with air intake placement on our campus. The lab building is currently being renovated and there are long term campus plan to renovate other buildings on campus. UUP requests that a portion of construction funds be devoted to raise air intakes to reduce the ongoing problems.
- c. **Smoking task force:** The task force has not met. J Mancuso reached out to system administration and is not aware of any movement from the Chancellor

6. **New Contingent Faculty List and Contingent Dashboard**

In May's L/M meeting it was agreed management would provide a provisional list of fall part-time academic faculty to facilitate UUP communication with them early in the semester. This has now been received (for which we thank you), but it came much later than we would have liked. UUP requests an annual provisional list prior to the semester's start so that we can sign up new members and to inform them about what the union can offer to contingent employees. B Benjamin shared UUP's appreciation of the work put into providing such a list. It is unclear why the list provided this year added 600 names to UUP's contacts. We would like to make an effort to ensure that the campus data is in alignment with the membership data we get from UUP going forward. When HR has the updated list, UUP would like to coordinate better so all members' information is available. UUP also requests emails and part-time vs full-time status on the list. Finally, we request an updated annual Contingent Employees Dashboard (including Athletics contingents).

7. **Reminder to circulate memo on SIRF scores**

At last November's L/M meeting when B Szelest visited, we discussed the role SIRF scores should play in evaluating of teaching (including contingent teaching). It was agreed the Provost's office should work with the committee on instructional evaluation chaired by Szelest to circulate a memo regarding the utility and limitations of SIRF scores to department chairs and tenure and promotion committees. UUP urged such a memo be sent early this semester. Of particular concerns is contingent faculty who may be assessed solely on SIRF scores. Faculty should be evaluated by faculty, not students. Additionally, in-class SIRF return rates were 80%; current online SIRF return rates are much lower, 20%-30%. It was suggested that the course assessment committee report on the value and limits of online SIRFs be condensed and circulated to chairs and tenure committees to inform them how SIRF data should best be used as part of (not the whole) process. T Mulcahy stated such communications should come from his office and that this should be a uniform process with clear expectations and explicit guidelines. UUP is willing to help the process to be open and accessible.

8. **Other**

- a. B Benjamin asked about the **reorganization of PEF and UUP employees** in the Physical Plant, requesting a new organizational chart clarifying unit and PEF members who are now in other jobs. J Mancuso will provide that.

- b. B Hedberg is convening the committee regarding campus allocations for the **IDA** awards shortly. The **Drescher** is due early October for the spring semester.

Meeting adjourned 12:00pm.

Minutes submitted by J. Harton.