

University Senate Research Committee Meeting

(online)

19 November 2021

1:00 PM

In Attendance: M. Burdsall, D. DeJong, C. Goodwin, M. Hall, D. Harrell, M. Holland, R. Kear, M. Kenney, M. Levine, L Melo, P. Morel, L, Rodzwick, R Rutenbar, S. Sant, S, Shahfar, A. Stephany, D. Tudorascu, B. Yates

The minutes from the November 22 meeting were approved as submitted.

Presentation on Human Resources updates

Dave DeJong (SVC for Business and Operations), Mark Burdsall (Assistant Vice Chancellor, Consulting Services) and Shaari Shahfar (Acting Assistant Chancellor, HR Operations) made presentations on updates to HR and answered questions from the committee

D. Dejong stated that he was aware that there were problems with HR and this was, in part, due to the old fashioned system that is now in place. He outlined several new initiatives designed to address existing problems

1) *Salary concerns*

Work is underway to modernize the compensation system, to provide clear guidelines for initial salary and raises. The old system had over 7000 unique job description making it difficult to provide clear guidance concerning salary levels. The entire system is being overhauled and there may be delays in onboarding.

2) *Benefits*

An option to access legal services has been added to the benefits. Student loan forgiveness can be handled through TIAA. Access to emergency child care using care.com has been set up. Help with financial aid and debt management is being set up.

3) *Work/life balance*

Flex work options have been introduced. During the pandemic an interim remote work policy was implemented. It is now possible to continue with a flexible work schedule by setting up agreements allowing to work part of the week remotely. Over 4400 such agreements have been set up so far.

4) *Professional development and evaluations*

All staff are now receiving annual evaluations and there has been 99% compliance with this policy. Supervisors were not getting enough support and HR has developed a new supervisor training program. Sick days are being front-loaded. HR is working on climate culture to ensure best practices and equitable hiring. One day/month can be taken for community volunteering

M Burdsall gave more detail about the changes to the compensation system. The system has developed a catalogue of 1400 jobs with input from subject matter experts. Various job families have been created with more specific descriptions. These generic descriptions can be edited to specify details for specific positions. The next step is to place existing staff into the new job descriptions.

Questions from the committee

L Rodzicz brought a concern about job transfer when asking for a salary increase when duties were added to the description.

P Morel raised the issue of not being able to offer competitive salaries in certain areas such as data analysis. S Shahfar answered that HR does not oppose any particular salary, and a unit may choose to pay any salary they want. HR may question a salary based on law since issues of pay equity may be raised in these circumstances

S Sant raised many concerns with the problem of hiring the right individual such as the slowness of the process, the fact that individuals who apply to the posted positions are not qualified and the difficulty in finding appropriate candidates. S Shahfar answered that HR does not decide the approval process for job postings – this is done at the unit/department level. Centralization of the process is needed because of audits. M Burdsall answered that HR has recruiters that can be asked to assist with identifying candidates and this can be requested at the time of posting; it is also possible to ask HR to post where needed.

The issue of lack of available child care on campus was raised. D DeJong noted that UCDC runs with a deficit and that they are adjusting rates and increasing wages to be more in line with other facilities. He also stated that HR was working with UPMC on developing a new facility in Oakland and this is in progress.

Research Report from Rob Rutenbar

Covid 19 update

M. Holland reported that the Health Advisory Committee is meeting regularly to discuss how Pitt will be changing his Covid stance. The vaccine mandate has been announced in University Times and will be in effect by December 6, in line with the mandate from President Biden.

Mission Statement of the Research Committee

P Morel asked the committee to look over the mission statement with the aim of revising it. Due to the lateness of the hour this was not discussed and will be discussed at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm. The next Research Committee meeting will be on December 17 at 1 PM via zoom

Minutes submitted by P. Morel and S. Sant