

Winthrop University
Staff Conference Meeting Minutes
August 27, 2019
Dina's Place

Staff Assembly Present: Megan Baggarly, Kara Cauthen, Thomas Cornelius, Katie Gawronski, April Hershey, Lydia Johnson, Jessica Martin, Kirk McSwain, Claire Mooney-Melvin, Brittany Neely, Linda O'Connor, Tanya Pettus

Absent: Johnathan Brabson, Chris Johnson

Staff in attendance: approximately 65

Call to Order & Approval of Minutes

Linda O'Connor, chair, called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm. She acknowledged the approval of minutes from the June 4 Staff Assembly and June 18 Staff Conference meetings.

New Staff Assembly Members

Linda introduced the new representatives for 2019-2020:

- Tanya Pettus – Human Resources
- Chris Johnson – Finance & Business, Facilities Management
- Katie Gawronski – Access & Enrollment Management
- Claire Mooney-Melvin – Athletics
- Megan Baggarly – Student Affairs

She also announced that April Hershey would be serving as the new Vice Chair, and Kara Cauthen as the new Secretary.

Leadership Q&A

Linda announced that one question that was submitted would not be read because it identified a specific staff member. She reminded everyone that questions concerning specific individuals should go through one's supervisor or HR. The following questions were presented to leadership:

1. *As lovely as our bookstore is, there are not a lot of options for those who require larger sizes. I was curious if there might be an embroidery business that has the approved designs on file?*
 - a. Dr. Mahony said that Southpaw and Logo Works both have our logos on file, and can embroider on anything that you bring in.
2. *With such a well-known and excellent College of Education, and a serious, almost scary, situation of teachers being needed desperately in SC, what specifically are we doing to attract teaching candidates from local high schools (and other South Carolina high schools) to Winthrop so that they can get great education, local internships in Rock Hill Schools, and be instantly employed in Rock Hill Schools (with Rock Hill now being an All-American City)? As a staff member and alumni, I do not see any emphasis being put forth to attract education students to WU for the benefit of educating students in SC.*

- a. Dr. Mahony said that Winthrop puts more emphasis on this than many other schools do. We have a large teacher cadet program, and partner with nine different local school districts. The teacher shortage is a national crisis, not just a Winthrop problem. Winthrop was actually hit later than some other schools because we have put so much emphasis on recruiting in this area.
3. *Why are faculty/staff parking spaces being taken away around Kinard when we already are low on parking? Large vehicles take up the parallel parking in front of Kinard which leaves little room for others. We need the spaces. Why couldn't the bus pickup be 10 feet further to one side, so as not to lose those spaces?*
 - a. Wes Love explained that this decision was made primarily for pedestrian safety, and not due to the specific bus stop location. Winthrop worked with the city and other stakeholders to identify the best places on campus for the bus stops to be. Anywhere that the stops were placed on campus would mean that the bus is crossing many crosswalks, and the buses need 20 feet line of sight before a crosswalk to adequately see pedestrians. The spaces were removed to create the necessary line of sight.
 - b. Dr. Mahony added that the MyRide has exceeded expectations for ridership, and that the number of riders is expected to continue to go up now that students are back.
4. *Why doesn't the Coliseum host concerts over the summer? It seems like it would be a perfect concert venue, especially as there are few facilities like it in Rock Hill. Hosting concerts (that do not interfere with any athletics events, of course) could provide summer revenue for the university and spark interest in Winthrop in those who might attend the concerts.*
 - a. Dr. Mahony began by saying it is a misunderstanding that it wouldn't affect athletics to have events in the Coliseum over the summer. Many athletics teams have summer camps. There are only about 60 days a year that the Coliseum would be available for these types of events, and those are more likely to be during the school year.
 - b. Neal Miller explained that we are trying to build this sort of program from the ground up. It is easier to build excitement, engagement, and quality when the students are here. Once our program is known for having those qualities, it will be easier to expand into the summer. We also don't want to conflict with the city's summer amphitheater programming. However, this is a viable model for revenue that we are working on building up. Staff can help support the program by spreading the word about events that we do have.
5. *What is being done with the Farm House? It seems to be in bad shape and it would be a waste of money to repair it, and Winthrop and state funds are needed for more important repairs. Do we still need (or do we still have) a Farm superintendent position now that the farm crew reports to Facilities Management on campus?*
 - a. Dr. Mahony said that we have the same number of staff working to maintain the grounds at the farm as before. He said a decision has not been made yet regarding the Farm House. The options are to fix it up, do nothing, or tear it down – which would also cost money. It is not a priority right now compared to other facilities needs.
6. *Staff Assembly should address some of the contradictory policies on campus. For instance, I was told the summer hours were mandatory in my division, but I learned from other colleagues that people were able to modify and customize the hours (like skipping lunch breaks to have Friday off).*

Another discrepancy is “working from home.” Some people are allowed to do it freely while others are met with a hard no if they request to work from home.

Furthermore, I was told that there was no summertime dress code and that you continue to dress accordingly, yet this summer I saw people in jeans and shorts during the week (outside of Friday). All the contradictions are unfair. If there are rules and policies in place, everyone must abide by them!

- a. Lisa Cowart addressed each aspect of the question. First, in regards to summer hours, she said that if someone is not following the standard summer hours, we assume that their department head and divisional VP are aware and have approved the change. There is often a reason for deviating from the normal hours. We can have more flexibility for individuals during the summer, assuming that the VP has approved the change.

Winthrop does not have a dress code policy. We have all different types of offices: some require uniforms, some professional dress, and some can dress down more. It would be difficult to produce a code for all of our employees, so we leave this up to the discretion of the VPs and department supervisors to determine what is appropriate. Some departments may have their own dress codes if the supervisor deems necessary.

Finally, Winthrop also does not have a telecommuting policy. Some employees have been approved to work from home for a period of time, but this was usually due to medical reasons. There would not be a way to make a campus-wide policy fair; some jobs are more conducive to working from home and others are not. When things like this happen, there are often reasons behind it that are not visible.

7. *Recently, the state provided a 2% increase for state employees. However, the majority of staff (who actually do the work that keeps the institution running on a daily basis) received an increase in paychecks of on the average \$10-20. That amount will not even cover a tank of gas for most cars. This is more of an insult than a solution to the need to pay the employees decent wages. Winthrop has, in the past, used these state increases as “raises” for the staff. When will Winthrop start to increase the pay for those of us that deserve an increase?*

As an add-on to the question, if the government increases the minimum wage to \$15, will all other hourly wages be increased the equivalent amount? The increase for someone making minimum wage will be \$7.75 – will all salaries be increased to reflect this change in the value of their work?

- a. In reference to the first part of the question, Lisa Cowart explained that we are currently conducting a compensation study. By the end of the year, we should have an implementation plan to identify issues and a multi-step plan to address them. That doesn't mean everyone will get a raise; we will have to see what the number to address all issues is first. It may take a few years to address everything. More information about the compensation study can be found on the HR website, including a timeline for the project.

Regarding a minimum wage increase, she said that the last time it was increased was 2009, and the change happened over three years. If the government made the decision to raise minimum wage, it would probably happen incrementally again. It is too difficult to answer what we would do at this time. We can't predict how much money would come into play, or what issues might still exist after the compensation study is done. We will cross that bridge if we come to it.

Announcements from the President

Dr. Mahony had a few announcements. First, we cannot always do things equally but we can always strive to do things equitably. He announced that the freshman class is up 8-9%, transfers are up 1-2%, and graduate students are up 15-20% mostly due to the online programs. Overall we are up about 50 students. We have exceeded EAB projections for this year, which is significant. As for how this relates to the budget, it is still too soon to say. Each of our students is unique (i.e. different financial aid packages, whether they live on campus or not, whether they have a meal plan or not, etc.) so it is not as simple as knowing we are up or down 50 students; it matters which 50 students it is. He said that we did end last year's budget on a good note; for the 5th straight year our unrestricted net position went up. Those funds will be available for one time needs like facilities upgrades. Departments across campus did a good job of cutting costs and coming in under budget.

Provost's Introduction – Adrienne McCormick

Dr. McCormick gave a presentation covering her first 45 days as Provost. She discussed the goals and projects for the upcoming year: increasing the fall-to-fall retention of all degree-seeking students, supporting pre-college programs like dual enrollment, improving the efficiency of course scheduling, increasing professional development opportunities through the Center for Professional Excellence, and forming the ombudsperson committee to begin identifying candidates for the role. She covered some staffing changes and restructuring taking place in Academic Affairs leadership.

A question was asked regarding Dr. Adolphus Belk's role as Faculty Diversity and Inclusion Liaison and the creation of affinity groups on campus. Dr. McCormick explained that affinity groups are being built around shared cultures, like African-Americans or Asian-Americans, for example. These groups are being developed in partnership with the diversity council.

Two questions were raised concerning the ombuds position: would this position only serve faculty, and what is the timeline to have someone in place? Dr. McCormick clarified that the ombudsperson will serve faculty and staff. We are at the point where we need to form the committee which will make recommendations for someone to fill the role. The president will then appoint someone, and a public announcement will be made. The committee will include the chairs of both Faculty Conference and Staff Conference. There was also clarification on the role of an ombudsperson. This role is conceived as a part time job, and there will be training and guidelines for this person to follow. The ombuds role is separate from HR and exempt from reporting, which makes it a completely confidential resource for employees to seek advice. Nothing shared with the ombudsperson will ever be repeated, unless an issue comes up repeatedly and shows a pattern with university policy that should be addressed.

Admissions Updates

Dr. Amanda James gave a presentation on the work Admissions has been doing. There has been a lot of restructuring. We've been working with EAB to determine the amount of scholarship aid we need to give in order for students to come here. We have been able to cut the amount of money we give, while still growing enrollment. There have been some changes to admissions events for this fall: there will be monthly Saturday tours, two fall open houses, college and program specific tours, and a larger ambassador team. Admissions has also changed the way some recruiting territories are organized and cut some out-of-state recruiting budget. We are still working in some exploratory markets, though. Eduardo Prieto explained that the exploratory markets are chosen based on a number of factors, including whether they have direct flights to Charlotte, average test scores and GPAs, the average number of students that choose out-of-state schools, and average per capita income. Dr. James said we are still working to recruit international students as well.

She shared a list of selling points for Winthrop that included academics, community, location, and value, but explained these are not the traits that make Winthrop unique. What is unique is to share our personal experiences: Why did you choose to work here? For alums, why did you choose Winthrop and then return to work here? These are the things that will help attract new students. Recruitment is everyone's job. Everyone you meet could be a link to a potential student. Staff can help by coming to events, saying hi to tour groups, making community connections, and staying up to date by reading Admissions' monthly newsletter.

Katie Price added that University Communications & Marketing has created a "Uniquely Winthrop" piece that will be sent out to staff soon that can be used as a resource.

Committee Updates & Announcements

Campus & Community Involvement: Carol Adams announced the next Food Truck Friday will be 9/20 from 6-10 pm. We still need volunteers for checking IDs and giving out bracelets. The first 200 Winthrop IDs will get \$5 in Food Truck Bucks.

Media & Communications: Linda announced that the next Staff Stuff will be out the first week in September, and to contact Kara Cauthen for subscription instructions.

Professional Development: Linda said that the PowerPoint slides from this summer's Professional Development Conference are now available on the Digital Commons. Marcia Willis announced an upcoming event on 9/26 from 10:30-12:15 with speaker Dr. Mattell Jones.

Brittany Neely announced the newest staff members, and April Hershey asked them to keep an eye out for the e-mail regarding Welcome to Winthrop.

Shelia Burkhalter announced the first annual Campus Safety Week which will take place September 16-20. There will be a variety of programming aimed at students, faculty, and staff. On 9/17 immediately following Staff Conference, they will be offering Active Aggressor Training for staff.

Shelia also announced that Homecoming week will be November 11-16. There have been changes made to tailgating policies due to trash issues and safety concerns that came up last year. People will have to reserve a space; registration opens 9/3 at 11 am. There will be a \$5 parking charge, but this is to defray the cost of added trash receptacles and staffing for safety. The hours will be 8-3:30, which is ending 30 minutes before game time to allow staff ample time for cleaning.

Katie Price shared information about the upcoming Alessia Cara concert. Anyone who purchases tickets before 9/6 will be entered for a chance to do a meet and greet with Alessia. Someone asked whether there would be a charge for parking at the concert. Neal Miller said that our goal is not to charge for parking, but it will depend on ticket sales, because we have to cover certain costs. Either way, there will be a free option; we are looking into offering shuttles with MyRide if we do have to charge for parking. Ticket holders will be informed ahead of time so they can plan accordingly.

LeAnn Pounds announced that there are many wellness events coming up, including open enrollment, preventative screenings, and a benefits fair. Keep an eye on the Daily Digest and Staff Stuff for more details.

Meeting adjourned at 3:31 pm.