

Rural Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes of April 9, 2009

Present: Ashley Munro, Crystal Wilson, Holly Royce, Bryan Uher, Susie Baird, Jennifer Elhard, Jen Stutesman, Travis Brinzow, Juella Sparks, Marianne Freelong, Jennifer Youngberg, Becky Walker, Byrd Norton, and Liz Recchia

Excused: Colleen Abrams

1. Call to Order – Liz called the meeting to order at 9:30 am
2. Staff Recognition Award-- Ashley reported that they received three good nominations but that two of those packets were not complete. The candidate they chose for the award was Barb Nelson. Susie wondered if they received a packet for Agnes McIntyre but Ashley said they had not. Juella suggested that Ashley check with Nichole to make sure no applications were submitted to the Staff Council Office. Holly said that she was still collecting money from directors. All directors had paid except for the director from the Kuskokwim Campus. Susie said she would speak with their director.
3. Discuss Theme(s) for Committee to Focus on this Year
 - a. Cost of Living Differential--Liz introduced Jeannine Senechal, Director of Compensation, to discuss the cost of living differential since members had questions on the subject. Jeannine reported that the university and state geographic differentials are the same. Jennifer Elhard asked what could be done to get the university to look into the cost of living differential. Jeannine said that it's unlikely the university will raise their cost of living higher than what the state has it set at. To take action, she suggested sending a letter to Beth Behner, the Director of Human Resources. In that letter, explain why we want the cost of living differential looked into and if some consideration would be given to this matter. Jeannine stated that it was highly unlikely anything would happen this year but next year something might be done. Susie suggested contacting our legislators, which Jeannine encouraged. Juella Sparks added that the cost of living differential is tied to the state and affected by union employees. She suggested contacting ASEA (the Alaska State Employees Association) and seeing what it would take to get them involved and talking about this subject on our behalf. After Jeannine hung up, the committee continued to discuss this issue. Juella suggested we draft a letter to President Hamilton on the topic. Susie made a motion encouraging the committee to work on the letter. Marianne seconded it and the motion passed. Before composing the letter, the committee decided to gather hard numbers to back up the arguments and to contact ASEA. Susie offered to get hard numbers and will send them to Juella and Liz. Juella and Liz will work on putting together a letter. Marianne offered to get contact information for ASEA and the letter that is drafted will be sent to them.

- b. Consistent Annual Training in Current Field--Jennifer Youngberg reported that she is meeting with Anne Sakumoto to work on develop training for job families. If anyone wanted to help, let Anne know. Anne and Jennifer were hoping to find people in specific job families to recommend the training they think is needed for the job. Members of the committee were interested in helping but were unsure of the different job families and asked for a list to be provided. Juella asked the committee for feedback on Skillsoft. The members reported hearing good things from coworkers.
 - c. Creating a Strong Rural Voice within UAF--Marianne reported that she was working on the letters and will get something together soon. Juella commented that the Diversity Action Committee, which she is part of, discussed how to involve more rural representation. The Diversity Action Committee discussed having a rural student rep on their committee and Juella wanted to know how the Rural Affairs Committee felt about it. The committee was in favor and thought it was an important seat to have. Juella asked that the rural affairs members in support send her an email stating so and she would bring it up at the next Diversity Action Committee meeting.
 - d. Special Topics Workshops for Staff--Liz reported that she was working with Martin Miller but so far they hadn't been able to schedule a distance delivery training session for staff. She will try to connect with him and see if they can schedule something in May.
4. E-Learning--Liz reported that there was a Skillsoft training session scheduled for Friday, April 10 from 9:30-10:30am. Most interested committee members weren't going to be able to make it because the chancellor was hosting a forum at 9am on Friday. They wished to be kept informed on other demo dates.
5. Other--
 - i. Juella asked if anyone had seen the new health care rates. Most had not but she reported they are pretty steep for some people and she had already received some angry phone calls. One of the complaints was that health care rates are increasing and there is no step increase. That is false information. People are still getting their step, it's just combined with their cost of living. However, if people are very dissatisfied, she said to encourage those people to contact Jeannine Senechal.
6. Next Meeting: Liz is going to send out a Doodle and see what works best for everyone. Please be on the lookout for that.
7. Adjournment--The meeting was adjourned at 10:27am.