Exempt Staff Council and Non-Exempt Staff council
Thursday, October 13, 2011
11:30-1:15, MHC 304 and TMH 252

Members present: Margaret Cahill, Terry Lynn Eggert, Shannon Hendricks, Sarah Huesing, Andrea Koepp, Tony Lewno, Nate Rolloff, Sandy Schwartz, Colleen Stephens, Kay Wimer,
Absent:

Father Malone gave the blessing before the meal. Chris Igielski of the Non-Exempt Staff Council (NESC) then welcomed Minneapolis and introduced the NESC members. Shannon then introduced the Exempt Staff Council.

Dr. Sue Huber gave a brief update on the academic side. She started by introducing some new staff members. Dr. David Engberg – Director of International Education Center. Julie Gacnik – Director of Graduate Marketing Communications and Enrollment. Dr. Ann Johnson is now the Director of Faculty Development Center. Elizabeth Smith is now the Associate Director of Faculty Development.

Dr. Huber then talked about our university rankings. UST has once again moved up in the rankings. Sue listed a number of specific schools and areas that have been ranked, all of them favorably.

We are preparing for a 2013 HLC accreditation visit. This effort is being lead by Lucy Payne along with Marty Johnston and Wendy Wyatt. Dr. Huber shared a committee structure with us and discussed the format. There are 5 criteria: Mission, Integrity, Academic Programs-quality, resources and support, Academic Programs-Evaluation and improvement, Resources and planning.

Graduate enrollment has good news in that they are relatively flat (not a lot of decline like many other schools), the bad news is there are definitely areas to improve in. Considering what is happening across the country they feel they are doing a good job of maintaining where we are at.

The university has an online learning initiative and goal. IRT and Academic Affairs are researching for a vendor to explore with and are looking to have an “unaccredited” program running by fall 2012. This will give us an idea of where we want to go with online learning.

Dr. Mark Dienhart has been asked to take on the state of the university along with some specific questions. UST has endured much historically and Mark believes much of that is due to the employees it has working to keep it going. We have had to lower the number of freshmen we have brought in to help control our discount rate (financial aid). We have only had 2 presidents in the last 50 years which is a sign things are going well. The quad has changed drastically as new buildings have gone
up. For certain rankings we are grouped with the U of M, yet many of us think of ourselves as very different from the U of M.

There was also a question regarding medical costs but Mark will defer that to Sara Gross Methner.

In response to a question if there would be a staff buy-out in 2012? There is not currently any plans for any buy-out programs. There have been a couple times this has been done in the past due to circumstances only.

To explain a social media policy that has recently developed, Mark responded that a policy has been put in place due to the representation on the web that we were seeing and in some cases grossly misrepresented. Mark then read part of the policy to give us an idea of what it is about.

There was a question to Fr. Dease regarding extra days off at the holidays. This would ultimately need to be answered by Fr. Dease, but currently we are scheduled to work. There are events scheduled on campus during that time so if we were to close, those events would need to be rescheduled or cancelled.

Jane Canney answered a question regarding using the AARC track without a membership. Unfortunately you cannot use it unless you become a member but if you are a benefits eligible employee you can get your money back each month by going 12 times per month.

Father Malone then spoke regarding some questions submitted. When will civility return? There is civility in the midst yet. There is a lecture series occurring regarding civility. Father has also talked with people and in general has had positive responses, people feeling this is a civil community. He would like to hear from others that feel differently and what their perception is.

What resources are available for GLBT employees? Hopefully we have created an atmosphere that is welcoming and accepting of all people. As a Catholic institution we should treat others with respect. There is an Allies group on campus for anyone to join and/or support.

Mark Vangsard then gave a presentation and started with good news. We have just completed FY11 and are happy to report that we have met our budget. As we look at FY12 there are concerns but we will work through them. Graduate revenue may look slightly unfavorable but undergrad is looking favorable.

Mark was asked to discuss the outcome of the voluntary retirement program. There were 22 faculty and 30 staff positions that opened up. The faculty positions either were left open for a year before refilling or are in the process of refilling. Staff positions were meant to be open and see if it was possible to not refill them.
Have the new travel and purchasing policies worked out? A number of changes have occurred and the changes have affected a number of people. They are still being worked on but currently have saved approximately $2.1 million. We have also asked departments to use internal services which has had incredible savings overall for the university.

Shuttle buses have been running late but it is just due to construction.

There was a bike safety question posed for thefts mainly on Minneapolis campus. There is a group that is working on this to see if some changes can be made to make bikes more secure.

Does UST have a policy to replace office chairs? You can contact Jim Barron to evaluate your workspace including chair.

Has UST looked at a credit card program with benefits? We have a program in place where UST does get benefits.

Mark then introduced Sara Gross Methner. She has been here 6 weeks and already dealing with some interesting topics. Her role is general counsel and chief HR Officer. She is basically our internal legal counsel and is working to make sure we are addressing our biggest exposures. She will not deal with all of UST’s legal issues, there are just too many. But she is trying to get a handle on what areas we have a legal need and where we are spending our legal funds.

A question was posed if office hours can be handled by students, can Non-Exempt Staff cut back on hours at slower times? You can purchase additional leave time according to a policy we have in place (HEPLT – Hourly Employee Purchased Leave Time). There is also a voluntary unpaid leave policy that some employees could fall under. Both of these require supervisor approval. There are some restrictions/calculations with this second option. There is a third option to use up paid vacation, then voluntarily have unpaid leave with supervisor approval.

Addressing benefits was next. Annual enrollment is coming up in the next months. There are no changes to dental and vision. There will be a grace period on flexible spending. Healthcare is a significant challenge across the US. Inflation and new technology increases costs. UST is self-funded so we have a risk with that as well as a cost. Over the last 5 years there have been a range of increases aside from last year when there was no increase as we looked at making changes. Last year we exceeded our budget. This year we are looking at an 8.3% increase to cover our costs. We are looking at plan design changes but there is not much we can do at this point considering we have 5 plans already. UST has an average age of 5 years older than the BCBS average age, which is a significant amount. There is also a health screening coming up that employees are encouraged to participate in.
Has UST looked at plans that include alternative therapies (such as acupuncture)? Sara doesn’t know off-hand if UST has and what the cost involved would be.

A question was raised to see if you could join the AARC just monthly rather than for the year. You cannot, but if you first join in November you would only have to pay through December as it runs by calendar year.

Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,
Nate Rolloff