

OPEN STAFF COUNCIL MEETING

October 14, 2004

11:45AM-1:00PM

MHC 304-St. Paul; Video Cast to TMH LL09-Minneapolis

Approximately 80 staff in attendance in St. Paul; 15 in attendance in Minneapolis.

Guests: Ms. Edna Comedy, Associate Vice President, Human Resources
Dr. Mark Dienhart, EVP/Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. Tom Rochon, EVP/Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Gene Scapanski, VP for Mission

Lunch was provided – chili, cornbread, cookies and lemonade.

Laurie Dimond introduced the guests. Each guest gave an introductory statement before opening the floor to questions. Of note, Dr. Scapanski announced that the third and final draft of the Mission was given to Father Dease last week, on October 6th. The Board of Trustees will vote on the Mission at their meeting next week.

QUESTIONS by staff with **Guest's** response:

1. Give a brief summary from the ACC University Forum earlier this week.

Tom: This forum primarily addressed student's issues. Some of the issues brought up were:

- transfer credits; specifically why so many credits do not transfer;
- parking;
- Safety and Security; specifically crime on and near campus
- overview of the Budget and upcoming Capital Campaign; specifically, future impact for students, such as scholarships.

Mark: Discussion around the Capital Campaign helped to give students a better understanding of priorities. Some things that students wanted to be considered as a priority, besides scholarships, were a new or improved student center and recreation center. The Board of Trustees will hear the feasibility report next week.

2. Has Human Resources considered separating PLT into sick time and vacation time?

Edna: Because of her short time at St. Thomas, Edna deferred the question to Mary Anderley. Mary responded that at one time they were separate but in 1995 a committee recommended that they be combined into PLT; the basis of this recommendation was that many staff were not using their sick time.

3. Why is there a difference in benefits between the exempt and non-exempt?

Edna: UST looks at similar outside institutions to benchmark against so that we are competitive thus obtain good people to help meet the University's goals and objectives. Even though UST is well within external and internal alignment with our benefit packages, Edna will be reviewing our benefits as part of the HR Advisory committee agenda; she will keep the Staff Council informed of the committee's discussion on this topic.

4. It would seem that a disservice was made when sick and vacation time were combined into PLT; how can this be reversed? (question came from a staff member that was on the committee that recommended PLT) Several other staff expressed concerns with PLT; i.e. people will come to work sick because they don't want to use/lose their PLT.

Edna: Steph Monogue (from the Benefits area of HR) commented that with the change to PLT,

staff actually gained a week and gave some clarification regarding Short Term Disability and using PLT. Edna said that she will be sure to include PLT on the Fringe Benefits Advisory Committee agenda. Comments or concerns with PLT should be emailed to Edna at ercomedy@stthomas.edu.

5. Comment on what has been done regarding equity of salaries and job responsibilities since 110 employees left UST three years ago due to lay offs and early retirement.

Edna: This is standard practice in midcourse adjustments therefore is a common occurrence at other institutions. If your position was changed and/or you have added job responsibilities, your supervisor should do a job profile and work with their HR partner to determine if your position should be reclassified.

Mark: It was a fix for a time of financial difficulty. Mark is proud of the fact that they were able to respond to last year's financial problems without loss of employees or departments, by doing other things such as increasing parking rates. UST continues to be one of the top private institutions in MN because of the special people it employs.

6. Where does consideration for reclassification of positions come from – HR or the department?

Edna: Consideration for reclassification comes from the department supervisor or manager, not HR. Their responsibility is to educate the supervisors and managers. The supervisors/managers can work with the Compensation area of HR as well as their HR Partner for reclassifications and completing job profiles.

7. With the closing of the School of Continuing Studies, employees that are taking advantage of the tuition remission benefit are being forced to take day classes because of the limited evening classes. Is UST looking at options for these employees and is it different between exempt and non-exempt?

Tom: The University is looking at different options of instructional delivery in the evening.

Edna: There is no written policy regarding allowing employees to take day classes; it is at the discretion of the respective supervisor. To ensure equity, UST should adopt a policy. The Fringe Benefits Advisory Council and Human Resources Advisory Council will include this on their agenda. The policy would be University-wide so there would be no difference in the policy for exempt and non-exempt employees. Currently employees can work with their supervisor as far as scheduling to attend day classes. The expectation would be that the employee still gets their job/work done.

8. When will the flexible benefits package be out and what will be in it?

Edna: The flexible benefits package is late in getting out this year because it is still under consideration. A decision will be made at the President's Staff meeting next Monday after which an announcement will be made and the packages will go out as soon as possible.

9. How can staff give their input to policy discussions?

Edna: There is a Staff Council member on the Human Resources Advisory Committee (Laurie Dimond) and on the Fringe Benefits Advisory Committee (Lisa Keiser & Joanne Rhoades). You can give your comments or feedback by emailing a Staff Council member directly or by going to the Staff Council web site at www.stthomas.edu/staffcouncil and clicking on the Comments link, or by filling out a pink form found on each table. At the Staff Council meetings, there are committee reports that are included in the minutes so staff can be informed by checking the Staff Council meeting minutes. Inquiries/suggestions at the Staff Council web site can be sent anonymously, but you will not get back a response. If you wish to get a response there is an option to include your name/email/phone.

10. With the new job matrices, where can we find the new salary pay grade ranges?

Edna: Human Resources is developing an HR Self Service page that will include information such as the pay grade ranges. It is still a "work in progress" so currently this information is not available online; you should contact your HR partner.

11. Is there consideration for tuition remission for study abroad?

Edna: This is a fringe benefits issue and as such will be presented as part of a package to Father Dease.

12. With the conversion to Banner, what can be done about the increased work load and training required to do our job, especially those tasks that are not done frequently?

Mark: Full conversions are never easy but in the long-term we will be better off than with what we had. Suggestions from staff to make the conversion easier were to centralize training within the department and to put training instructions online.

13. Will we be getting a printed hard copy of the staff directory as promised last year?

Mark: The budget allows for the printing of the directory every other year; this is the year for it to be printed. He will double-check to make sure that this is the case.

14. Why, with the bigger freshmen class, is there lower total enrollment and credits?

Tom: There are two factors: the enrollment overall in the graduate programs is down and there was a large graduating class last spring.

15. With Nancy McGrath leaving the University, what is the plan for diversity at UST?

Gene: They will definitely fill the position. Gene is working on a job description for the position, Director of Diversity Initiatives, and working with Edna to get the position posted soon.

Laurie Dimond reminded staff to use the pink sheets or to go to the Staff Council web site if there are questions or comments that were not presented at this meeting.

The meeting was concluded with a drawing in St. Paul and in Minneapolis for a Bookstore gift certificate. The winner in St. Paul was Marylou Schmidt and in Minneapolis it was Kathleen Fedor.

The **next Staff Council meeting** will be Wednesday, November 10th at AQU 210.