



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Minutes

Staff Alliance

Wednesday, September 6, 2017

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

[Google Hangout](#)

Audio call-in: 1-855-280-1855

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting came to order at 10:02 a.m.

Voting Members:

Kara Axx, President, UAF Staff Council; Chair, Staff Alliance

Ryan J. Hill, Co-President, UAA Staff Council

Shiva Hullavarad, President, SW Administration Assembly

Kolene James, President, UAS Staff Council; Vice Chair, Staff Alliance

Brenda Levesque, Co-President, UAA Staff Council

Sue Mitchell, Vice President, UAF Staff Council

Kiwana Sutton, Vice President, UAS Staff Council

Staff:

Morgan Dufseth, Executive Officer, System Governance

Guests:

Geoff Bacon, Director of UA Labor and Employee Relations

Members Absent:

Elaine Main, Vice President, SW Administration Assembly

2. Adopt Agenda

Ryan moved to approve the agenda as presented, and Sue seconded. No objections. The agenda was approved as presented.

3. Approve Minutes

3.1. August Retreat Meeting Minutes

Approval of the minutes was postponed until the October meeting.

4. Public and Guest Comment

4.1. Staff Unionization Discussion

Geoff Bacon

Geoff answered the questions: What are the pros/cons to unionizing? Why did the last attempts to unionize fail? Would UA administration be supportive if the staff unionized?

Geoff noted that the staff currently enjoy a lot of flexibility and agility with regard to their interactions with administration – especially the ability to adapt to new changes as they happen. With unions, collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) typically span 2-3 years in length so as new issues/challenges come up they cannot be dealt with until the end of the current CBA. Because the agreement is locked in for several years, it might not allow for immediate consideration of concerns. Another factor to take into consideration are personal differences among employees. Each employee has different needs and wants from their employer and a union negotiated agreement might not be able to adequately address their desires. Staff currently have the ability to receive merit bonuses and pay increases but in some CBAs those aren't allowed (Local 6070 – Crafts and Trades contract, for example, does not allow for merit step increases). Another thing to consider, the union has to be independent of an employer— and its members have to fund and support the process—typically through union dues; even non-members may have to pay a fee in support of the union. Unions also have to have their own governance structure, whereas under the current structure at UA, governance is a partner with administration.

Geoff noted the last attempt to unionize failed in 2010. At the time, there were two unions vying for staff attention and support. However, it seems as though they couldn't create enough support for a vote because staff felt the unions were treating them like dues rather than people. The most recent efforts culminated with fraud convictions for one of the union organizers for falsifying union cards.

Should the staff vote to unionize, the university has to legally remain neutral. Geoff also noted that both he and President Johnsen have worked for unions. That being said, a unionization campaign would likely upset the current climate of the university. UA would also be responsible for stepping if they felt false promises were being made by the union that could not come to fruition, or supervisors were inappropriately attempting to influence the decision by their employees of whether to support the union or not.

Ultimately, Geoff noted, a staff union at UA would not solve Alaska's budget issues or elect new legislators. If staff vote to have a union, UA would negotiate in good faith. But a union cannot guarantee they can negotiate a specific increase in pay or change in benefits. Staff at UA currently sit on the same health care committee as unionized employees. Unions also cannot negotiate who an employer hires or what jobs they offer.

Geoff noted UA currently supports increasing opportunities for staff and encourages governance to suggest ways to better train staff.

In response to questions from members, Geoff noted UA staff are not at-will employees and that once they reach 180 days of employment they are subject to just-cause termination. Regarding layoff notices, Local 6070 members have negotiated four weeks notices (similar to 30 days for non-exempt staff). Geoff noted that if having a third representative on JHCC was important to staff, they could definitely bring that up and request an additional member to balance the committee numbers.

Geoff noted that, because UA is one employer and one IRS tax entity, all but one current union represents all employees across the state, they negotiate statewide contracts. Should staff vote to unionize, the University would seek to negotiate with one union on a statewide basis, per Board of Regents Policy 04.11.010. He noted because each contract takes time and resources to negotiate, it would be too costly to support individual union contracts at each campus

5. Chair's Report

Kara Axx

Kara noted she met with President Johnsen the previous week. Their meeting was after a meeting on enrollment strategy so they discussed how to get students more involved in local corporations by creating programs specific to local industry as well as how processes at UA are broken or outdated. Kara noted they discussed ways to empower employees to make changes to better their processes. Regarding Summit Team councils, President Johnsen noted he is still working on a response to governance. Kara shared her concern that governance representatives are being left out of the ground floor work of drafting charters. She noted SA would like to be HR, Business, and Students Services councils. Summit Team met in August and enrollment was a large part of the discussion—not just to increase it but how to break out costs for difference degrees (certificates, occupational endorsement, etc.) The Summit Team also discussed the need for revision of UA's registration/enrollment process. The president asked for a new group to look into the enrollment and report back with recommendations on how to improve the process. The president noted they need to identify issues they need to take to the Board and issues they can start working on themselves now. Regarding Title IX, there will be a big push to update websites with micro and short non-discrimination statements. UA is currently meeting OCR compliance deadlines but at local levels there are staffing concerns that there are too few employees to handle the caseload and will cause UA to miss future deadlines.

Kara also review her written report to the Board of Regents and asked for suggestions on her oral report. She noted she planned to start with a brief history of her long employment at UA and then lead into how the rest of staff feels about increased workloads. She noted she also

wants to note that she is excited to work with the president. Ryan noted he'd like to broach the subject of full-time employment definitions since they are in policy and that it might be good introduce the topic at the meeting.

6. Staff Council Reports

6.1. UAA Staff Council

Ryan noted UAA Staff Council is meeting tomorrow and have a rather aggressive agenda for the meeting. They have UAA's CIO visiting and are also meeting with President Johnsen in the afternoon to discuss the chancellor search. They also discussed professional development with the UAA interim chancellor who asked them to submit a proposal that he would work to implement it. They are also meeting with UA HR to discuss changes to Health Savings Account, and are also working on a diversity statement in response to the chancellor's lukewarm condemnation of the events in Charlottesville. UAA Staff Council also plans to distribute a staff morale survey for UAA staff.

6.2. UAF Staff Council

Kara noted they sent the idea of 360-degree reviews to their Staff Affairs committee, who decided they were not supportive of 360-degree reviews. This was a rather surprising outcome but was due to fear of retaliation from managers and supervisors, which in itself is rather telling of the current morale situation. At UAF, the EEO and Diversity Office is housed in a non-ADA compliant space. UAF Staff Council is working to make reporting ADA issues easier as well as supporting renovations to the EEO office. They also have a resolution up for consideration that would oppose annual leave cash-in changes due to concerns regarding requirements for part-time employees.

6.3. UAS Staff Council

Kolene reported that during convocation, the UAS Staff Council had a 1-hour session with staff members. The session, a Staff General Assembly, facilitated dialogue with staff on morale and asked two questions: *Do people care about doing a good job?* and *How do you know when you are doing a good job?* The Staff Council is also planning for Indigenous Peoples' Day events and activities, and are hosting a lunch'n'learn session at the upcoming Elder and Youth Conference, Regarding local empowerment, Kolene noted she hasn't seen much outreach from executives/management to Alaska Native leadership, however, President Johnsen is attending the lunch'n'learn which is a positive sign for those relationships.

6.4. SW Administration Assembly

Shiva noted they received a presentation on online safety. SAA also formed a safety committee to address employee safety at SW and are planning to have CPR and AED training for SW staff. SAA is also planning a lunch'n'learn series for SW staff on topics including

7. Staff Alliance Committees: Please send names of local members to Morgan

7.1. Staff Health Care Committee

- 7.2. Compensation Committee
- 7.3. Morale Committee
- 7.4. Ad Hoc Staff Emeritus

8. External Committees

- 8.1. System Governance Council: How can this best benefit staff?
- 8.2. Joint Health Care Committee: Alternate Needed
- 8.3. System-wide Councils: Staff Alliance Representatives – waiting to hear back from President Johnsen on whether the Alliance can designate someone other than the chair to serve on each council.

9. Ongoing Business

9.1. Strategic Pathways Phase III Feedback

[Reference 2](#)

There have been forums with President Johnsen and the chancellors. Johnsen will update the Board in September and will go back to them with recommendations in November. UAA Staff Council has provided feedback on all areas. UAF, UAS and SW will continue to solicit comments and feedback from their constituents. Morgan noted the Alliance could wait to give feedback after the Sept. BOR meeting.

Members noted they would like to know how the implementation of Phases 1 and 2 were going. The websites for both [Phase 1](#) and [Phase 2](#) were updated on Sept. 14 and provide a brief snapshot of activities to day.

Regarding the decision to consolidate the College of Education at UAS, President Johnsen released his [decision to modify the original proposal](#) ahead of the September Board meeting. The new plan changes significantly from the initial one in that degree granting authority, faculty, staff and students will remain affiliated with their current university but there will still only be one dean.

10. New Business

10.1. FY18 Goals and Opportunities

- 10.1.1. Retirement Options – Inequity regarding option of 403b plan – The Alliance will request information from UA Benefits on why decision was made; Ryan noted will want to be specific in what we request.
- 10.1.2. Full-time Employment Definitions – Brenda noted she will look into what federal/state/city/borough definitions are.
- 10.1.3. Unionization Efforts – Ryan will look into this issue further to determine how best to move forward, if at all.
- 10.1.4. Faculty and Staff Regents – No action from the Alliance at the moment. However, the Alliance will look into identifying a sponsor for the bill during

next session. Alliance members agreed they will want to work closely with faculty to make sure a staff regent is included in the bill.

- 10.1.5. Layoff Notice for Hourly Employees – Request that exempt and non-exempt have the same period of notice – Alliance members will take this issue back to their local staff councils to determine whether they support the idea.

11. Agenda Items for October 4 Meeting

Please send to Morgan if you have any.

New performance management tool—training?

Board testimony – suggest staff council presidents attend when meetings are at their campus; also have local president attend meeting to help support Kara during meetings.

12. Roundtable discussion

13. Adjourn

Sue moved to adjourn, and Kolene seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.