

SAA Highlights

November 2009

A review of the October Meeting

The primary purposes of the SAA are to provide an effective opportunity for Statewide Administration employees to play an active role in issues affecting their welfare; to promote a positive workplace; to represent employees' viewpoints on Regents' Policy, university regulations and other matters affecting the intents of the university; and to act as a liaison between statewide employees, the University of Alaska and their respective communities.

SAA Meeting November 11

The next meeting of the Statewide Administration Assembly will be Wednesday, November 11, 2009, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm in the Sherman Carter Conference Room, Butrovich 204. Public and guest comments are the first item of business on the agenda. All Statewide staff are encouraged to bring any concerns or questions to the staff representatives on SAA. For a complete agenda visit the SAA web site: <http://gov.alaska.edu/saa/agendas>

Presidential Search

The Board of Regents hired the agency Academic Search to help find a new president for the University of Alaska. Dr. Elaine H. Hairston is UA's presidential search consultant. She is currently drafting a job description. It's not an actual description of job duties, it's a statement of where we are as a university right now, and what we want in a future leader. The draft will be vetted to the presidential search committee and the Board of Regents. It will be used to advertise for the position in various publications throughout the country. Updates on the Presidential search process, and the final version of the job description, is posted online at www.alaska.edu/bor/ under the Presidential Search menu.

Members 2009-2010

Contact a SAA member with any issues or concerns you want the assembly to investigate.

2009-2010 SAA Members

Betty Dupee (2008-2010)
Kim Eames (2009-2011)
Alicia Wyse (2009-2011)
James Milburn (2008-2010)
Rita Murphy (2008-2010)
Monique Musick (2009-2011)
Dana Platta (2009-2011)
Bess Rounds (2008-2010)
Earl Voorhis (2009-2010)
Erica Fitchett, Anchorage (2009-2010)
Ron Swartz, Anchorage (2009-2011)
Linda Hall, Alternate (2009-2010)
Lisa Sporleder, Alternate (2009-2010)

President's Report

Kim Eames' president's report covered the UA Presidential Search update and a recap of the Staff Alliance meeting. Please refer to the individual sections, Presidential Search, Staff Alliance, and Layoffs/Non-Retention for an overview of the topics discussed.

Staff Alliance Update

Something that came up in the Staff Alliance meeting on Oct. 13, 2009, that was not on the agenda was an excellent comment from a guest: that staff compensation is not getting enough attention from the staff and that it seems like it should. There are layoffs happening at all the campuses. People are leaving and their jobs aren't being refilled. The workload is not going down and the remaining employees have to double-up and triple-up on duties because there is nobody else to take care of it. The fact that we are losing people, and pay may not increase, is something the staff should be concerned about. The guest suggested we start asking administration and executives when they are going to start valuing the staff appropriately. One of the regents (Mary Hughes), at the September Board of Regents meeting, said the 3 percent was put in as a placeholder, and that if it can be reduced it should be. We need to start making an effort to let them know we are important. That is a message we need to get out to our constituents promptly.

Lisa Sporleder commented that it irks her that UA was waiting for their compensation numbers until GGU (General Government Unit) had come up with a contract. UA is not union, so why do we wait to do what they do? She also expressed surprise over Regent Hughes's comment about wanting to reduce compensation further. This has never come up before, where we have no step increase, no COLA and are now at the whim of the Regents. It is cause for concern.

In another topic from the Oct. 13th Staff Alliance meeting, Eames mentioned a report which stated that for every percentage point of employees using generic medicines, the cost to the university prescription plan is reduced by \$75,000. Although there may be some negative connotations associated with generic drug use, it is well worth a conversation with personal physicians about using generic drugs. It was also suggested that the best

approach when encouraging other employees to consider switching to generics is to make them aware of the direct cost-savings to them.

Lisa Sporleder said staff will be able to go through governance channels to recommend what changes they want in the health plan. The suggestions will funnel up to the Joint Health Care Committee (JHCC) members. Caremark presented new options for the pharmacy plan to the JHCC at a special meeting. JHCC actions can be found on their website: www.alaska.edu/benefits/joint-health-care-committ/

Layoffs/Non-Retention

Eames's report on the Staff Alliance meeting touched off a conversation about layoffs, non-retention and retirement. Ron Swartz, via dial-in from Anchorage, asked if there was any data on the number of recent layoffs at UA. Eames said she would see if she could locate such data for all the campuses.

Linda Hall said, in relation to layoffs, many term-funded positions were not being continued and that the position, the work, is still there. Kim Eames will add term-funded to her research.

Linda Hall said she listened to a finance meeting where someone mentioned that research had been done on age-related retirements, incidents of those people over a certain age retiring, and those sort of age-related dynamics. Joan Harings was recommended as a good person for Eames to contact to retrieve this research.

Eames said another aspect of layoffs to consider is non-retention. The issue has slightly died away in the last few months, but she doesn't want to see it overlooked since it is an important factor in how many people are let go and whether or not they are being let go properly. Who are they non-retaining? Are they only non-retaining the staff? For folks who have been here longer than six months, the length of the new-employee

probationary period, there are two choices for the termination of employment: you can be non-retained or you can be dismissed for-cause. One of the issues in the case of non-retention is, if you go on to a different employer, the university records say you were not-retained, but there is no negative connotation to the non-retention. There is no reason given either. If you want to have a reason for your job loss then officially it needs to become a for-cause loss of employment, which generally has a negative connotation. Another issue is that a non-retained employee is flagged in Banner, so whenever that person re-applies for a job on campus a flag comes up and the person doing the review of the applicant may use that to deny further employment at the university.

Betty Dupee suggested that Eames look into the number of retirees who return to work at the university and how those numbers figure into the overall staffing issues. They can only work up to half-time and receive no benefits, yet they also are being paid their retirement pay so there really is no savings. If they come out of retirement and go into an Executive position they get retirement pay and full time executive pay. They do contribute to ORP retirement.

Anchorage Update

Erica Fitchett said she received a phone call concerning the addition of three days to the Christmas break. The caller heard Statewide would be making the leave mandatory, but we discussed in previous meetings that it wouldn't be. It is still unclear. Eames said the issue was discussed at the Human Resources Council, but these questions were not fully answered, so Eames has an email in to Vicky Gilligan for clarification on what is being called a "soft closure," if it really is mandatory, also if someone takes leave without pay will they get holiday pay.

Dana Platta said according to a conversation with HR, if someone has an active pay status as of

December 17 then they would receive holiday pay. Eames said that needs to be obtained in writing.

Fitchett said more information and training was needed regarding the transition to the Google Apps calendar. She said deadline information was not making it to Anchorage. During a training session for Google mail held at the end of September, she was told to wait until the end of October to transition to Google mail because OIT would be really busy until then, and there was no decision made by the University to transition to Google calendar. But now it is being discovered that the deadline for transitioning to Google is the end of October. E-LIVE training is only offered once a month and Fitchett is talking to OIT to get someone to come to Anchorage and work with them on the transitioning. No one in Anchorage received official notice of the Nov. 1 deadline and only found out because a staff member read the UAF Cornerstone.

Google Applications

Anchorage employees were not alone in their concern and frustration with the sudden announcement regarding the switch from Meeting Maker to Google Calendar.

Dana Platta said OIT was using the roll out to Google mail to encourage transitioning to Google Calendar since there will be a cost savings in the non-renewal of Meeting Maker licenses.

SAA Highlights is a monthly update of the Statewide Administrative Assembly. The editor is Monique Musick. Please address any questions or comments to her at mmusick@alaska.edu

For more information on SAA visit the Web <http://gov.alaska.edu/governance/statewide-administrative>

Bess Rounds said she would speak about transitioning concerns at a luncheon she is attending on Friday. Also, Steve Smith should be invited to the next meeting to further address transition and training concerns.

Eames recognized a suggestion from Lisa Sporleder and Dana Platta to draft a resolution whereby SAA would voice their displeasure/objection and disappointment with how the Google Apps mail and calendaring transition was handled, and how training, communication and the timeline have not been user friendly. Those making decisions are too removed from those affected by the decision.

Eames asked for recommendations on a procedure for creating the resolution. Monique Musick suggested that information SAA members wanted to know be included, and that over the next week, not by email, but by going out and talking to people, find out what staff want to know or what their concerns are. Not only is this a statement of “this is bad” but also a statement that we need these concerns answered; that more is given than just a “we are unhappy”. Bess Rounds suggested making the contact by email as a means of having a physical record. Musick said the outgoing email should state that SAA representatives are going to go to OIT with the email responses from staff members. Dana Platta said the email should not have a negative tone, but the tone should be set by the responses to include the positive as well as the negative.

Musick said she would write a draft of the email in the afternoon (Oct 14). Once the draft goes out Eames will take a Yay/Nay vote on the wording of the email and forego a vote during the current meeting.

Holiday Potlucks

The Thanksgiving potluck will be on the 20th and the Christmas potluck on Dec. 16. Bess Rounds will coordinate food and advertising. Everyone is welcome!

Fundraisers and Charity

Once again SAA will “adopt” two families for Christmas via Love Inc.’s annual Adopt-a-Family holiday gift drive. Monique Musick will be Chair this year. Love Inc. needs the application by November 6.

Fundraising potlucks for various charities once again was discussed. SAA needs clarification on what language to use when advertising potluck fundraisers and if a general disclaimer should be applied to all such functions. Monique Musick said she would look into the wording for the disclaimer. Sasha Layos joined the meeting and took down questions to forward to Mike Hostina for clarification on how potluck fundraisers should be handled, from wording of invitations to how charities are selected.

Violent Intruder Training

Monique Musick informed the assembly that on November 13 Butrovich will be used for a Violent Intruder training exercise involving campus police, Fairbanks and North Pole police, Emergency Medical Technicians and the Alaska State Troopers. A mandatory training and information meeting is set for the week prior to the drill.