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Consultative minutes 03/09/2012

Consultative Committee

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UMM Consultative Committee
Minutes
March 9, 2012

Present: Jennifer Herrmann, Nancy Helsper, Troy Goodnough, Zack Van Cleve, Jim Barbour, Bonnie Tipke, Brook Miller, Dennis Stewart, LeAnn Dean, Manjari Govada
Guests: Sarah Mattson, Darla Peterson, Gordon McIntosh, Henry Fulda

Chair Jen Herrmann called meeting to order at 9:05am in the Prairie Lounge. She reminded us that VCAA/Dean Bart Finzel had asked the Consultative Committee to discuss ways of introducing new staff and faculty to campus. This is especially relevant now since there will be a high number in fall 2012. It would be helpful for us to identify what a process would look like, and not consider just the first days colleagues spend on campus, but a longer span of time with a total initiative perspective. What should such a cultural introduction look like and who should be involved in process?

Henry Fulda asked if suggestions should be made now and the reply was they'd be welcomed. Some suggestions he has made in the past include a Mentorship programs, where faculty/faculty, P&A/P&A and USA/USA staff members would be paired to help share information between colleagues who have been here for a time and those that are new. This mentorship could include meeting once a month for coffee and focus on conversations about the UMM environment and similar topics.

Gordon McIntosh remarked that, for some time, we've had a faculty enrichment program, which pairs senior and junior faculty. He suggested that could be extended to all new faculty, including first year faculty. In the past there was an application process, but he didn't think any one had ever been turned down.

LeAnn Dean mentioned that there had been a P&A mentorship type program in the early 1990s.

Sarah Mattson shared some information from the Human Resources perspective and expressed an interest in hearing not only about general programs, but "nuts and bolts" type of specific suggestions. She said new employees should get to know HR colleagues (Sarah, Jenny Quam, Mary Zosel) well in their first year at UMM. She offered to share some of the specific activities that HR does now and distributed handouts (hiring and termination checklists, exit interviews, etc.). HR pays for the standard UMM nametag when a new employee is hired. They do more and more benefit orientation online. She also described briefly what UMTC does—a very ambitious year long program of connecting. For example, they do a "campus crawl" every month.

Various ideas were offered for activities: Monthly fun and inviting get togethers of a cohort of new employees; use Mike Vandenberg's introduction to students as a source of ideas for staff and faculty; show new employees the Pride of the Prairie DVD (or make it available to them); and encourage units to give USA staff to meet with colleagues and learn more about the campus, including lunch invitations;

Scheduling these activities would be challenging. It's important that employees believe this would be time well spent. There was a general agreement that we shouldn't wait too long before involving new employees in these activities, perhaps having a new cohort or group starting at least every semester.

We'd need a critical mass of at least five people to make it enjoyable and worthwhile. Supervisors should be encouraged to encourage their employees to participate. Darla Peterson suggested a new group start at least at the beginning of each semester and Henry commented it would be beneficial to start it the first month of each semester. Manjari noted that there might be value in having some weekend activities—relaxing social events. Sarah followed that arranging gatherings around football games, Performing Arts and other campus activities might be a possibility. It would be important that it not seem like they are expected to do a lot outside their work week, but as an option.

We talked about the faculty professional development day (called the Faculty Retreat in the past). Gordon explained it has been scaled back from the model of a few years ago. It will be held on campus again this year and this year's themes are service and outreach. The Professional Development day is scheduled for August 13.

Brook suggested we explore other ideas for making new colleague feel welcome – like providing snacks/doughnuts when they are unpacking the moving van. He also suggested we learn more about some of the specifics of the mentorship programs that have been held and perhaps develop a FAQ list of questions/topics.

Jen spoke positively about the idea of developing a syllabus type document of this comprehensive introduction to UMM. LeAnn suggested that such a document or syllabus be made available online so that mentors, coworkers, supervisors and others could see what is planned and then support or contribute to the activities. This web page should also include links to relevant HR and other sites. That way, when things are introduced, new employees could also go back later and refresh their memories. Henry commented that if the mentors and mentees had the same information, they could be more efficient in covering the information and could combine casual conversations with specific data. He also suggested that it would be beneficial to have new employees help order the topics in terms of personal relevance and individual needs.

Gordon brought us back to the timing issue, given the fact the first weeks of the semester are so busy. The Faculty Development Committee, HR and the Dean's Office all have important roles to play. We discussed the emphasis for the current Faculty Enrichment program was for tenure track faculty.

There was a question about whether or not to make these activities mandatory. Henry pointed out that, in most cases in industry such orientations are mandatory and this stipulation would be easier in the cases of bargaining unit, Civil Service and P&A. Another comment was made that faculty would find it worth their while to find an hour a month for such activities. Jen and LeAnn expressed a concern that we need to include non-tenure line and adjunct faculty. Gordon commented that there are different expectations for tenure-line faculty and assistance in promotion and tenure matters is important.

Manjari remarked that students can tell a difference between faculty who are comfortable in Morris and that it would be beneficial to have them feel welcome and included in activities. Dennis emphasized the wisdom of building a cohort of new employees who would feel comfortable with others in similar "new" situations. A "one shot inoculation" isn't idea. Gordon suggested that we might consider have the pairs of mentors, mentees get together from time to time to discuss common issues and encourage informal positive interaction. Darla commented that evaluations have shown that people like bonding with other new colleagues and this interaction is a positive thing.

Brook offered the idea that some institutions give a course release or some release time at the beginning of employment to kickstart their research in the first year. Dennis asked if there were some grant-in-aid possibilities here. In terms of non-tenure line faculty, Gordon mentioned that we should maybe reconsider the higher credit loan that is required of these colleagues. That's an issue in terms of mentoring and learning to know about the campus.

Jen brought us back to the task of identifying "nitty gritty" things—like the "Insider's Guide to Morris" type information. We need to be intentional about it. Otherwise, time challenges take precedence and people do not actually participate even if that was their intention. We also need to identify the "who" that is going to make these plans happen. LeAnn suggested that the Admin group should be included in some way, since all the division chairs and supervisors are involved in this group. They could also emphasize the need for supervisors to support this process. Nancy Helsper recalled that in the mentorship program previously sponsored by the Commission on Women, there was an intentional practice of pairing people up with someone outside their unit—to help reduce the silo effect. Maybe that's another way that the cohort of new faculty/staff would be helpful because it would encourage interaction across campus.

Brook offered the small idea of offering the LaFave House (underutilized in the summer) for temporary quarters when faculty come to Morris to look for permanent housing.

As the meeting concluded we wondered if it would be possible to get these plans formulated by next fall. But, it probably would be feasible to pilot a few activities next fall. We decided to form a sub-committee with representation from various groups to compile a document with suggestions for activities and people responsible for their implementation. This sub-committee is made up of: Dennis Stewart (faculty), Jim Barbour (USA) and LeAnn Dean (P&A). The document should be completed by the end of the semester.

Jen reminded the committee that no meeting would be held next week (mid-semester break) and our next meeting would be March 22nd.

Respectfully submitted,

LeAnn Dean