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Consultative Committee

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Consultative Committee
Moccasin Flower Room
March 30, 2012
9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Committee members present: Co-chairs Jen Zych Herrmann and Nic McPhee, Jim Barbour, LeAnn Dean, Troy Goodnough, Manjari Govada, Nancy Helsper, Brook Miller, Dennis Stewart, Bonnie Tipcke

Guests: Maddy Maxeiner, Nancy Cheeseman

Discussion of Open Positions in University Relations with Maddy Maxeiner, Associate Vice Chancellor for External Relations:

Maxeiner distributed three handouts: 1) Open positions in University Relations; 2) Mission of University Relations; and 3) a description of staff currently occupying positions and explanation of the transitions that have occurred in the past year. Maxeiner noted that the mission of University Relations should include acting as liaison to the all-University Office of University Relations.

The question before the Consultative Committee was presented as “What should we do about the open positions?” Maxeiner indicated that, upon the resignation of the director last year, the director’s “right hand person” was asked to serve on an interim basis for the current year. Midway through the year, another staff member transferred to a different department and her job was handled by hiring freelance writers. A staff member from the Chancellor’s Office has helped with duties related to the budget this year, as well.

One reason for delaying a decision about how to handle the open positions was that the University of Minnesota was doing a review of all communications jobs this year. As a result of that review, some job descriptions have been revised. For instance, the position of department director now requires eight years of experience and the communications manager, which is very similar, requires six years of experience. The salary minimums are \$70,000 and \$54,000, respectively, for those two positions.

The options require a decision about whether it is better to bring in new leadership because that person would provide a fresh perspective and new ideas or, instead, to promote qualified and successful people from within the organization. There was discussion about precedents for hiring at the director level without doing a national search. There was discussion about the timing of a national search and the consequences of disrupting large projects midway, as well as the possibility of further delays in hiring other positions in the department. In addition, employee morale and performance were noted as important issues.

Motion (McPhee, Govada): To endorse Option 1 from Handout #1: appointing the interim director as communications manager.

The vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion of Changes Due to Elimination of Assistant Dean Position with Nancy Cheeseman, Director, Office of Academic Assistance and Disability Services:

Questions for Nancy:

1) Do you have clarity about the responsibilities that fall under the Office of Academic Success and what they entail?

2) Does your office have the capacity and power and support/resources to get this done?

3) Do you feel like the Office of Academic Success is being fully utilized by the campus community? Do people, especially students seek out your office's assistance? Do you think the greater campus community (faculty, staff, advisers, etc.) know about the resources your office provides?

Committee members introduced themselves to Cheeseman, who started at UMM in Fall 2011. McPhee noted that some questions related to the topic of discussion today had been sent to Cheeseman in advance (see above). Cheeseman said she feels she has a lot of clarity related to her job duties, based on the interviews and subsequent talks with the Dean and Chancellor. She started work the same day as classes began. Having been provided with a mentor is something that would have been helpful in her transition to a new institution. She meets biweekly with the Dean, which is helpful, but would have appreciated an orientation to the culture of campus.

McPhee asked about the level of resources available to Cheeseman's office. Cheeseman she has a full-time administrative assistant, a spring term only student intern, and student assistants which are all very helpful. As is true in all areas, more resources would always be helpful and appreciated. Due to the unpredictable cost of tutoring and notetakers the office is running at a deficit, so she will need to be more creative to get through the year and still serve students well. Just one student needing a lot of services could wipe out the budget. DS has no previous data to indicate what capacity is, however this academic year DS currently serves 130+ (6% of total campus). If the office had sufficient resources many other services could be provided, ie increase in the tutoring program, a learning specialist and an adaptive technology specialist are a few areas which would add to overall quality of our services. Many students are hesitant to seek our DS services because they don't think they'll need it or they're having a difficult time with the perceived stigma of needed such support. They need to look beyond their disability toward academic success, like where to go for a job and other things. They have received faculty referrals and that is good. By next fall, there will be a new website on academic success. Also, an office operating manual should be completed by then, along with a faculty/staff handbook. They are planning to offer topical workshops on campus, including tutoring skills.

McPhee asked if Cheeseman feels she has sufficient authority to carry out her responsibilities. Cheeseman said her authority has been laid out carefully by the Dean. She is in constant communication with the Dean, Division Chairs, or Scholastic Committee. She likes the idea of developing a small working group to assist in the work already started by her. McPhee said it would be good to have workshops and communicate the goals of the office to faculty and staff. He suggested that the Fall Faculty Workshop might be a good place to start. Cheeseman said the Division of the Social Sciences asked her to provide an update, but she hasn't had time to visit the other Divisions. Her priority has to be students' immediate needs and that can be very time consuming.

McPhee asked if things were going well from her perspective. Cheeseman thought that they were. UMM is a different environment from what she was used to, coming from a smaller private institution. Govada asked if she had started collecting data. Cheeseman said that she had. She wants to increase assessment activities because the office lacks data to make a case for additional resources (financial, personnel or space).

Goodnough said he was glad Cheeseman is very proactive, especially in light of news that autism is increasing in the nations' population. These services are definitely needed. Cheeseman said the spectrum

of needs is wide. McPhee suggested that capturing the variability would expose the risk of our capacity for supplying services to students.

Miller commented that references for students going through a middle person who acts as a clearinghouse might be helpful. Cheeseman said she hadn't heard about this possibility, but thought it could help students. Students, especially freshmen, figure help is not available to them at the college level the way it was in high school. There is a lot of processing that needs to happen before we can get to the action level for a particular student. Students can also have such a sense of failure when they struggle at college. She intends to develop a welcome letter for freshmen and get to them early in the semester. We need an easier way to identify students with needs. Govada commented that when she was a prospective student touring UMM and heard about tutors, she thought that was a good idea. But when she actually got on campus, something changed in her thinking and she no longer saw tutors as an option. She is not sure what happened; however, she did get over that feeling and was able to use the tutors for one of her classes. McPhee noted that a lot of UMM students were doing well in high school and did not expect to be doing less well in college. They have to re-envision their place in the world.

McPhee wondered if the master adviser program could be useful to Disability Services. Cheeseman said she had just heard about that program and thought it could be helpful.

Herrmann said that Cheeseman has asked for ideas of people she could ask to be on a working group to assist her office. Cheeseman said the group size would be small—about six people. Some of the names offered for consideration: Tammy Berberi, Argie Manolis, Joe Alia, Barry McQuarrie (a master adviser), Heather Peters, Nick Leonard, and William Straub.

Later: Cheeseman asked that the following comments be attached to the minutes as background for our report:

I neglected to include that my position is only 10 months, which makes it difficult to complete some of the goals and objectives during the summer, such as accommodations for students current and incoming, cleaning up files and getting ready for fall, or any type of data collection and/or research that may need to be conducted. Again, these areas of concern have been an ongoing dialogue with the Dean, who has been very supportive of the work completed to date. I want to reiterate, I think and believe life over here has been running efficiently, effectively, along with consistency, without an additional reporting line of an Asst. Dean.

Submitted by
Nancy Helsper