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Consultative Committee

Campus Governance

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Consultative minutes 04/25/2013

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University of Minnesota, Morris
Consultative Committee
Moccasin Flower Room
April 25, 2013
9:00-10:00 AM

Committee members present: Co-chairs Brook Miller and LeAnn Dean, Zac Van Cleve, Jim Barbour, Jim Hall, Ray Schultz, Heather Waye, Chad Braegelmann, Joey Daniewicz; Allison Wolf and Jean Rohloff (committee members elected for 2013-2014) were also invited and attended this meeting.

Guests: Chancellor Johnson and Sarah Mattson

Since newly elected Consultative Committee members were invited to attend, the meeting began with introductions. Brook then set the stage for a discussion of civility on campus, the main agenda item for the meeting. He described the history of this topic as far as the Consultative Committee was concerned as well as previous committee discussions and guests. The committee referred to the memo sent to the Chancellor since our last meeting. Chancellor Johnson began her remarks by framing the topic in terms of the years of service and commitment that UMM employees provide. Their employment should be a good experience and accountability must be present. We all have a responsibility to create and maintain a positive work environment. She also emphasized that we all have a responsibility to report situations where there is a threat of harm. It is a witnesses' responsibility to share that information with the appropriate campus authorities. "There are no innocent bystanders." Also, language matters. We have rules and laws that apply and all on campus need to own them.

A committee member asked about making everyone, including new employees, aware of the legal procedures and appropriate responses to harassment. Are there mandatory meetings to make everyone knows what is expected and what is inconsistent with campus and government rules.

Chancellor Johnson stated that we need to develop a shared definition of what bullying is so people will know it when they see it. It does not have the formal definitions that sexual and racial harassment includes. She recalled that last year every campus employee was asked to attend sexual harassment awareness sessions either in person or online. Participation was tracked on campus. There was a higher participation of staff members than faculty at UMM. However, often the people who attend and participate already understand. She also said that people in leadership positions have more of a responsibility to set standards of behavior.

A committee member asked if explanations of these standards or the rules of behavior are included in new employee/ new faculty orientation. Sarah responded that all new employees receive a binder that includes this information. However, participation in orientation is not mandatory and not all people attend.

Another committee member said that orientation is a good place for such information but all of us need a refresher. It is important to have discussion of civility on an ongoing basis.

This comment was followed by a statement that when something is mandatory, it must be made clear why this is important and necessary. Encourage people to participate by making the value clear. Because of busy schedules, classes and labs, it's also important to have several options for attendance.

Some faculty members may appreciate having options beyond the 8-4:30 timeframe when they are busy with classes and office hours.

A comment was made that the higher the quality of the training, the better the turnout for that and succeeding sessions. There is also less grumbling if the sessions are well planned and presented.

Chancellor Johnson said she worries about liability issues the campus faces if we do not provide regular opportunities for understanding the issues and the rules. "Ignorance of the law is not a justification." She also stated that if the Consultative Committee is willing to weigh in on a mandatory participation, then the administration could take a stronger stand. Also, since there are so many places that employees can go when faced with difficult situations, they may be confused. Now, Consultative committee is another option for assistance to add to that list. Maybe there are too many places.

Other committee members asked if it was possible that people are too sensitive and take comments and actions in the wrong way. Having a "thicker skin" is sometimes helpful. However, we all have a responsibility to counter people yelling and other disrespectful behavior. The power differential must also be considered and can make a situation worse.

The chairs asked for ideas for reactions to the list of possible activities as listed in the memo to the Chancellor. The sense of community that characterizes UMM is a factor as we look for ways to enhance the positive aspects and address those that have a negative impact. These aspects may be described as the "softer" issues but there is a sense that they matter at UMM. The list of options was briefly discussed. Sarah Mattson suggested that there may be staff development funds available to bring in outside speakers and programming in the area of civility. It was suggested by committee members that such speakers could be followed up in the various employee groups and student organizations.

The Chancellor asked the committee for specific suggestions on what she could do from her position to address the civility/incivility issues.

The committee will tie up the loose ends of this discussion at our next and final meeting of the academic year. We will approve meeting minutes at that time. Committee members were asked to bring their Google calendars up to date as much as possible so a tentative time for the first meeting of the fall could be announced.

Respectfully submitted
LeAnn Dean