

# CWU Exempt Employee Association

Executive Committee Meeting

December 2, 2022

## Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:35pm

## Approval of Minutes

The meeting prior to this one was an introductory/familiarization meeting; no minutes were taken.

## Old Business

### 1) Previous Subcommittee Reports

- a) Salary Equity
  - i) Still waiting for information on the outcome of the open forums and the data that was collected, but have not heard anything from HR. Col'Lette will reach out within the next week or two to follow up.
- b) Employee of the Month
  - i) After the last employee recognition event (last February), there have been discussions but we haven't received any guidance for this year from HR.
  - ii) Col'Lette double-checked and we do have a \$5000 budget. Only about half of that was spent last year for all of the recognition needs. She will follow-up with Madai.
- c) Wellness Initiative Survey
  - i) Results are in, but unsure if data has been reviewed/analyzed yet. Will keep on our radar.
- d) Website Updates
  - i) Col'Lette suggested she may reach out to James Jankowski to discuss the open forums for the staff, as they had wanted them to be planned by the Exempt and Classified Employee Councils
- e) Strategic Planning Committee
  - i) Is now the Vision, Mission and Strategic Planning Committee
  - ii) Unsure if they are going to allow for a new participant, or if they'll want to maintain the existing representative, which is Col'Lette's boss (Jonathan Henderson). If that is the case, Col'Lette will obtain updates from him and bring them back to this committee
- f) ADAPT
  - i) Della has volunteered to participate on this committee in addition to Wendy
- g) Enterprise Facilities Committee
  - i) Ian volunteered to participate on this committee
- h) Gender-based Violence
  - i) Names have been sent into the facilitators but a representative has not been selected yet
- i) PBAC
  - i) Col'Lette, Amber and Wendy all offered to participate on this committee
- j) Health and Safety
  - i) Wendy volunteered for this committee, but will let the rest of the group know if she is unable to maintain her representation due to her role on multiple other committees

- ii) This committee has met recently, but we were unable to attend due to schedule conflicts
- k) Tuition Waiver
  - i) Brenda volunteered to participate on this committee
- l) Library Advisory Council
  - i) Mal volunteered to participate on this committee
  - ii) Col'Lette reported that this committee recently met and while she was unable to attend, they shared notes and had discussed new things they were rolling out as well as the reintroduction of Waffle Night for finals week.
- m) Equal Opportunity
  - i) Manuel is already participating on this committee
  - ii) Wendy reported that this committee met this week and reviewed the process for appeals related to allegation investigation findings, and the gaps where new policy may need to be created
- n) HR Recognition Sense-making Task Force
  - i) Col'Lette reported that they started reviewing the data, but there is a need for the group to meet again and that has not yet been scheduled.
  - ii) There were lots of recommendations, including flexible schedules/telework policies, discounted parking, extra PTO, less cumbersome and more personal recognition process
  - iii) Employees also recommended more training for supervisors regarding recognition; many employees feel that their supervisors only focus on negative or critical feedback – we're not building-up our people
  - iv) Another recommendation was to hire someone whose job is specifically to focus on employee morale, wellness and integration into the community
  - v) They also raised the question of why CWU maintains toxic and/or poor-performing employees
- o) Col'Lette will connect with the facilitators of all of the committees and let them know who their EEC representative will be so that they can communicate meeting dates/times and agendas.

## **New business**

### **1) Classified Employee Council**

- a) Lidia Anderson has stepped down as the Classified Employee Council Chair, as she has taken on a new title and is now exempt. Col'Lette reached out to see if Lidia would be interested in participating in the EEC.

### **2) EEA Goals for 2022-23**

- a) Beginning of goals discussion, as half of the group is absent for today's meeting
- b) The question was raised as to whether or not there were things that had been worked on over the past year that we should continue working on, and if there was a way to capture information about concerns that exempt employees have that we could be addressing
  - i) Col'Lette noted that we have some data but nothing recent, and suggested she could send something out to gain a better understanding of what exempt employees are struggling with currently
  - ii) The way this council communicates with the exempt employees on campus was also discussed. How are we evaluating needs, and how do we know these needs exist?

- (1) It was suggested that we utilize email on occasion, but need to find other ways to connect (in addition to Central Today, which was also mentioned)
- (2) One recommendation was to host a quarterly meeting or gathering for all exempt employees utilizing some of the \$5000 budget we have, with the goal of community building and familiarization with the EEC and our role
  - (a) It could also open up opportunities for discussions, though it was noted that because of the limited protections that exempt employees have on campus, many folks are hesitant to provide written feedback. It was suggested that maybe a listening session format could be beneficial, with a guarantee to attendees that any information would be captured generally (non-identifying).
  - (b) It was also recommended to keep it casual, and maybe offer lunch or snacks.
    - (i) Discussed offering alcohol as well
    - (c) Mal offered the DEC space as an option to host these events
- c) Mal suggested that it would also be interesting to know what the demographics of our exempt employee population are. Col'Lette noted that her office could easily produce that information.
- d) Amber offered the topic of supplemental compensation for exempt employees for additional responsibilities taken on. Faculty and classified staff on campus already have this in place. Exempt employees are currently told that they are not allowed to receive supplemental compensation but are expected to take on additional duties anyway. This hasn't really been discussed by the EEC already because the focus has largely been on the push for livable wages in general.
  - i) Patrick noted that Staci (HR) had mentioned that prior to her retirement, she would like to address cost-of-living increases and shifting them to more of a merit-based system instead of across-the-boards. This connects with the supplemental topic because maybe additional responsibilities taken on could be considered as part of that merit conversation.
  - ii) Amber also brought up the point that even if supplemental pay/merit compensation is addressed (and especially if it's not), there is still the issue of retention and burn out related to the expectation that people will/should take on more duties for the good of the university.
    - (1) When folks leave, especially when they were responsible for things like Orientation, it's shocking that they take the full-time job and just divide it out and expect everyone to pick up those pieces without additional compensation. While they did "ask," the expectation that you'll say yes is already there – the pressure of authority figures is involved, and it puts people in a tough spot. In addition, in Amber's specific situation folks were offered supplemental compensation initially for taking on the extra duties, but then that offer was rescinded.
- e) Other discrepancies between exempt employees and classified staff include the bereavement policy, and the ability to enroll in summer classes
  - i) The bereavement policy had been addressed, and was supposed to be adjusted but it seems that the topic fell off of folks' radars
    - (1) Clarification was provided on the current bereavement policy: exempt employees have to adhere to the definition of family from the FMLA policy when requesting bereavement. The policy only allows for leave if the deceased is a spouse or dependent;

so if someone's adult child or grandchild were to pass, they would not get bereavement leave.

- (2) One recommendation was to have a second level of bereavement leave; one based on the current policy that offers the full ten days, and then one that addresses other possible bereavement needs and offers maybe two days instead
  - (3) A concern is that folks don't generally know this, so they are already in a state of crisis and emotionally vulnerable when they find out that they may not be able to have bereavement leave approved
  - (4) It was noted that some folks have successfully requested bereavement for deaths that were not specifically a spouse or a dependent child, but it was also mentioned that this could have been a situation where the supervisor either didn't request specifics, or maybe is more lenient than others
  - (5) This council does have the ability to propose changes to these policies; it was also noted that these policies do not leave room for the way in which folks from different cultures experience death and grieving, nor does it address complex/nontraditional family systems or other relationships that may be equally important and impactful to the employee
  - (6) Wendy will check to see if there was already a policy update request (or something similar) submitted in regards to this topic. Otherwise, this and other policies can be reviewed and we can make recommendations through March, as the next UPAC meeting is March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- f) Amber raised the topic of investment in our new professionals on campus. Currently, we are missing the opportunity to connect with them and invest with them somehow, but not sure what that would look like.
- i) A review on professional development opportunities that are available to exempt employees (outside of the ones available through HR) could be done to better understand the needs and desires of exempt employees interested in professional development – that is one method of investment for the university
  - ii) The ability to take classes as an employee is recognized as a benefit and is significantly marketed as such, but there are limitations that seem unnecessary, including summer courses, and certain master's programs and certificate courses as well. We would hope that the university would support their employee's participation in these areas because it is professional development and the increased knowledge and skillsets would be applied at and directly benefit CWU – the investment basically pays for itself because you end up with better, happier employees
- g) Wendy brought up the need for a position that would function in a similar manner to the ombuds position, since that was not approved. The justification for this need is the fact that there is currently not a good way for issues related to bad/abusive supervisors to be addressed. This has also been a theme with the discrimination complaints that the Equal Opportunity Committee hears. This group agreed that these issues have resulted in the loss of multiple employees. It may be possible that this will be addressed as part of a larger performance management system overhaul, but definitely needs to be addressed.
- i) 360 evaluations and non-retaliation protection for employees who participate in those evaluations were recommended as items for further discussion

- ii) Mal included the fact that as a result of a grievance process he was recently involved in, he sees the need for an actual laid-out grievance procedure. He felt that they were just making it up as they went and did not believe that ultimately their roles influenced any of the final decisions made by the supervisor and/or appointing authority involved.

### 3) **EEC Standing Committees**

- a) Code Committee
  - i) Updating code and policies
- b) Professional Development, Mentoring, and Networking Committee
  - i) Professional growth and new employee involvement
- c) Salary Committee
  - i) Salary equity, salary distribution
- d) Public Relations Committee
  - i) Increase EEC presence/involvement in CWU and local communities
- e) Work/Life Committee
  - i) Promoting work/life balance
    - (1) Discussion:
      - (a) All of the committees have merit
      - (b) Maybe members of this group chair the committees, and then we recruit other exempt employees to participate as committee members
      - (c) Committees are framed around our goals; we share the goals with exempt employees and then offer participation on the committees to achieve those goals
      - (d) We can make a decision at the next meeting as assign folks to chair the committees, come up with the scope of our goals for each committee, then send that information out and ask folks to sign up
      - (e) Suggested to roll employee of the month under the public relations committee

### 4) **Grievance Procedure Discussion**

- a) There is a need to clarify/define what constitutes a grievance, and what constitutes a violation that justifies a grievance
- b) Mal shared his experience on a grievance committee with the group; he noted they were given almost immediate access to multiple documents including email conversations and other sensitive information like hiring letters, but they weren't told what they were supposed to do with the information. They had to look at the website to figure out how to proceed, as HR provided some guidance but weren't able to answer all of their questions, and it was also awkward to involve them since they were directly involved in the grievance.
- c) While they were able to figure out how to proceed on their own (scheduling interviews with those involved and gathering information to analyze), it got to a point where they were concerned about their protections as a grievance committee because of the level of folks they were interacting with.
- d) They presented their summary findings, but ultimately felt that their recommendations were ignored, and while they had determined that the person who filed the grievance was justified. Additionally, there is concern that because of the way the findings were presented, and the fact that the individual was either fired or left anyway and nothing came of the process, that it leaves the university open to lawsuits.

- e) It also appears as though selection for these committees is an issue. The grievance committee Mal was on did not have classified or faculty representation. Mal is unsure how he was selected, but noted that the person who filed the grievance was a person of color, and also that Mal was the only one on the committee that was a POC and also the only male. The committee representation felt very random.
- f) The group suggested that it seems it would be more appropriate for a third party and/or legal representative to facilitate these investigations instead of putting the onus on three randomly selected folks with little to no support.
- g) It was noted that these types of issues could be tied back to the whole need for supervisor (360) evaluations – to address issues that maybe don't necessarily violate policy but are just bad supervision behaviors
- h) It was determined that the policy for this issue is under HR's prevue, but the procedure is under ours. It was suggested that this group could perhaps table the topic for now and do some more research on it; maybe it would be appropriate for the Code Committee?
- i) The suggestion was made to invite Staci (HR) and potentially Traci Klein (also HR) to January's meeting and get clarification on the grievance policy/procedure
  - i) It was also recommended to identify other policies that we have questions on and include those in our conversation with Staci

5) **FTGOTO**

- a) The next meeting is the open meeting and will be fully virtual since most people will be out and/or working remotely

6) **Adjournment**

- a) The meeting was adjourned at 2:56pm