



The University of Georgia

Staff Council

Making a great place to work even better!

February 3, 2016
Miller Learning Center Room 250
2:30PM

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 pm by Staff Council Vice Chair, Marie Mize.

Roll Call

Members in attendance: Devin Arnold (via sub), Deborah Baker, Jason Bedgood, Teri Berryman, Kaelin Broaddus, Debi Chandler, Kelly Cona, Anjali Dougherty (via sub), Melinda Eades, Kat Farlowe, Elmer Gray, Michele Griffin, Stefani Hilley (via sub), Norma Holliday, Pattie Holly, Holly Ivy, Stuart Ivy, Melissa Jackson, Kevin James, Marcus Jennings, Christine Jepsen, Jenna Jones, Brenda Keen, Laura Kelley, Kristin Lawrence, Marie Mize, Mary Moore, Maggie O'Brien, Maureen O'Brien, Laquita Phillips, Laura Rhicard (via sub), Kyla Sterling, Carly Surratt, Kristi Wall (via sub), Shialoh Wilson

Members absent: Mandy Brogdon, Victoria Cooper, Michael Lewis, Sherri Stephens

A quorum was present.

Old Business

Revised Bylaws: Marie called for a second vote of the revised bylaws. They were approved unanimously.

Guest Speakers:

Marie introduced Juan Jarret and Travis Jackson from Human Resources who were invited to talk to Staff Council specifically about the upcoming changes to the shared leave policy directed by the University System of Georgia.

The biggest change to the plan is that UGA will transition to a bank or pool of shared leave from the direct donation program currently in place.

UGA was the only campus in the system not in compliance with the USG program. UGA's program had been grandfathered because it existed longer than the USG approved program that allows employees to apply for leave to take care of loved ones.

HR's current plan is to hold open enrollment in late May/early June so the policy will go into effect July 1.

The existing leave program allows for annual leave and sick leave to be donated. The new plan will only allow for a donation of sick leave. Juan shared that there was a vigorous debate at the

USG office about this particular change, with proponents at the system level advocating for annual leave to be included. In the end, the decision was made to allow only sick leave donations because it is a sick leave program, and to keep accounting of the two types of accrued leave separate.

Enrollment will be a one-time event, rather than an annual event. The minimum donation is 8 hours, however, the employee needs to have at least 48 hours of sick leave accrued at the time of donation so that the employee keeps 40 hours after making the enrollment donation. The maximum donation is 80 hours.

Juan shared that this minimum requirement creates an issue for employees who want to join the plan but can't accrue the required amount of sick leave by enrollment time. His contingency plan is to delay enrollment to coincide with benefits open enrollment in the fall, and have the plan begin in January. He has to discuss this with the USG office, though.

Juan clarified that employees can pass up the initial opportunity to enroll, but will have an enrollment opportunity every year.

Juan addressed the issue of the bank being exhausted. Other institutions within the UGS have not exhausted their banks. However, UGA's utilization of the current shared leave program is almost twice that of other institutions, so that gives Juan and Travis pause. If the bank is depleted, each enrolled employee will be asked to donate an additional 8 hours. The employee has the option of no longer continuing in the program. Juan hopes that the upcoming rollout of the new program will inspire employees to enroll.

Travis shared that the existing program has a lifetime limit of 480 hours borrowed. The new plan allows for an annual limit of 480 hours.

Juan stated that a leave pool removes the variability inherent in a donation-based policy. The pool would allow for a needy but unknown employee to get the necessary leave.

Travis stated that the new program allows for leave to be requested for serious conditions based on the FMLA standard. The current plan only allows for leave for critical conditions.

Juan shared that the soon-to-be-hired Work/Life Coordinator will be plugged into this process and will help employees navigate the leave opportunities available to them. He said the new program is not ideal, but it's putting UGA in the right direction. Compared to the existing plan, it is less bureaucratic and more employee-centric, and there should be less misuse of the new plan than the old.

In order to qualify for the shared leave an employee must exhaust all accrued sick and annual leave. The employee will submit an application much like that for FMLA, but it will be reviewed by a committee. Leave can be awarded retroactively if the employee needs the leave before being able to apply for it.

Juan shared that he feels this program is no different than short-term disability insurance, and he will be looking at UGA's benefits suite to see if a shared leave program can be replaced by a university-funded short term disability plan.

Maggie O'Brien asked Juan if having long-term disability insurance would be a requirement for shared leave enrollment. Although he did not directly answer the question, he shared that he thought the USG should aggressively market long-term disability so that more employees would

sign up and then USG could get more competitive rates, making long-term disability more affordable.

Laura Kelley asked what would happen if an employee had both shared leave and short-term disability insurance. Travis said that the employee would decide which to use because they could not be layered together. He said that most employees with short-term and long-term disability insurances would not utilize the shared leave program.

Travis shared that he strongly believes that long-term disability insurance should be mandatory for all employees.

Kevin James suggested that HR offer pre-open enrollment information sessions that cover all the disability and leave options available to employees. Travis agreed that was a great idea and something his department could do. He gave a brief rundown of the plans: Long-term disability is recommended for anyone who could not go out on retirement if suddenly faced with a severe illness. Short-term disability is good for employees without a lot of leave accrued.

Travis clarified that new employees would not be able to enroll in the shared leave program immediately. They need to have accrued the required minimum leave.

Stefani Hilley inquired if sick leave accrual would ever change from 8-hour blocks to 10 hour blocks like at other employers in Georgia. The 10 hour blocks allowing for doctor visits. Juan said, "the short answer is no." He then said that the accrual of sick leave in higher education is misunderstood. He said there may be a movement toward accrual of PTO (paid time off) which may be used at the employee's discretion. It reduced administrative burden, and public accountability. The big downside is the current TRS benefit for sick leave.

Juan stated that any employee taking shared leave would be actively monitored, as they are currently. He also stated that if the new shared program does not work for UGA, he will go back to the USG for help in crafting a plan that does, possibly university-funded short-term disability insurance. Travis added that other USG institutions have not had problems with their shared leave programs. He also added that there will be a culture shock here at UGA because there are employees utilizing the current shared leave program who will never accrue enough leave to qualify for enrolling in the new plan.

When asked about how an employee would qualify for shared leave if their health issue was chronic in nature and time off could not be accurately predicted, but rather needed intermittently. Travis and Juan said that it would work like intermittent FMLA leave works now.

Juan said that even though the shared leave plan does not fall under HIPPA, all medical information provided with applications will remain private.

Kelly Cona thanked Juan and Travis for addressing Staff Council and asked if there were any other questions. Juan asked if he was missing anything. Stefani Hilley suggested information sessions. Juan said that he is trying to get out to individual departments to share information, but is currently wrapped up getting prepared for open enrollment.

Kerri Testament thanked Juan and Travis for sharing this information and for making the changes to the plan. She shared her story of needing time off for her daughter's heart transplant and not being able to access the current shared leave program because she wasn't the one with the illness.

Randolph Carter asked if any employee could slip into a new employee orientation session at the Training and Development Center for a refresher course on benefits. Travis said absolutely.

Staff Council Committee Reports

Because of time constraints, it was agreed that committee reports would be emailed to Staff Council representatives.

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Chair's report

On Jan 19, I participated in VP Victor Wilson's graduate seminar class on higher-ed administration with the two other self-government leaders. We discussed what and how University Council, Staff Council, and the Student Government Association do to influence policy. The students asked a few insightful questions, mostly based on how we address the hierarchy issues.

I also attended the State of the University speech and the Founders Day Lecture. President Morehead outlined several significant accomplishments and new programs. Of course, they revolved around students and teaching & research. His remarks are online; I encourage you to read them, as they map out the near term policy strategies he considers most important.

The Founders Lecture was based on the idea that robots and computers are acquiring ever more capabilities, leading to the inevitable conclusion that today's students, including professional students (pharm & law), will likely find their jobs performed by highly learned machines within their career spans. This mandates that we teach differently; not so much skills, as how to learn new skills. An interesting impetus and derivative on the "teach critical thinking" mantra.

I am currently participating in the interview process with candidates for the Director of Institutional Research. Coming in February are the winter meetings of the Alumni Association Directors, UGA Foundation Trustees, and Board of Visitors.

Minutes: January minutes were approved unanimously.

New Business:

Upcoming elections: Kelly Cona shared that the nominating committee will be sending out information about open offices and UC committee memberships in hopes of recruiting nominations. Anyone can self nominate. She encouraged everyone to consider getting involved. Elections will be held in April.

The meeting adjourned at 3:38 pm.

Next Staff Council Executive Committee meeting 3:30 pm Tuesday, February 23, 2015, Georgia Center, Room C.

Next Staff Council meeting 2:30 pm March 2, 2016, MLC Room 267.