

Staff Advisory Group Meeting
Wednesday, December 9, 2015
3:00 PM, ICC

Agenda

- 1). The PQ process. Visit the [PQ process webpage](#) for more info. We could start a conversation at this meeting and then invite Alena Lorens-Myers from HR to come to our January meeting to answer any questions we come up with.
- 2). A discussion of the [latest strategic plan draft](#).
- 3). Do we want to have a social event for staff, similar to the Friday afternoon social after faculty meetings?

1). Lisa Christensen greeted staff attendees and welcomed Barbara Beck, Associate Vice-President Finance and Administration & Director of Human Resources, and Joshua Woodfork, Vice-President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity. Lisa opened the forum up to group conversation about the PQ webpages on Skidmore's Human Resources' website. There was conversation and clarification about the review structure, for example, that there are two governance bodies in place that review staff PQs: an exempt and non-exempt committee.

The committee appointment process was explained, that the VP of each division designates a member. The webpage listed current members. It was suggested that the selection process for the exempt and non-exempt PQ committees be made more transparent, perhaps this description of the process be included on Human Resources website. Otherwise, staff may feel that it's

"man behind the curtain" type appointment. A question about whether asking all staff for input about who the committee members should be was asked. Barbara shared that someone is appointed from each division by each VP. Every year, Human Resources asks if someone new should be appointed or to keep with the same committee member. Barbara explained that since there is a learning curve for everyone involved, ideally the same appointment committee member ought to be active or a few years.

Various attendees shared that they'd been through the PQ review process and others have not. There seemed to be consensus that not everyone has gone through it or does not to do so as often as Human Resources mandates. There was conversation about what the specific intent and purpose of the PQ review process is and whether there are any outcomes such as a raise or other benefit to the employee or department. Conversation led from the PQ review process to the performance review in regards to how the reviews function separately and in conjunction with each other to the benefit of the employee, manager and Skidmore.

Further conversation followed about the frequency and practice of performance reviews for staff. Both tend to vary *significantly* across the College. Some managers and departments systematically conduct reviews each year as Human Resources requires. Others less frequently (i.e., every five years); and, in at least one case, a PQ and performance review has not occurred at all. One example shared by a staff member indicated that despite nearly two decades of service, only one performance and PQ review had occurred. For those who shared about their

experience with reviews, feedback was generally positive, that it is beneficial overall and useful to them as individuals and employees. While some staff voiced concerns about not having a performance or PQ review as often as they'd like, those same individuals came away equipped with more information about how they might ask and perhaps even persuade their managers to schedule reviews in the future. There was an observation shared that the planned manager training curriculum, document shared at a previous staff advisory group meeting, will assist Human Resources in this endeavor.

Barbara Beck from Human Resources shared the PQ review is a tool with several purposes: a) it is to begin a conversation between the manager and subordinate about the expectations/changes/description of the job; b) as an internal structure document, it makes sure all job requirements are well documented along with consideration for what certificates, degrees or other credentials are necessary to perform the assigned duties of the position.

Barbara shared that prior to coming to Skidmore, job descriptions seldom changed. That employee reviews rarely occurred. However over the course of the past decade in particular, not only has a rapid acceleration of internal and external factors, i.e., impact of technology in the workplace, led to changes in some job descriptions, but also and more importantly, departmental re-organizations, strategic re-alignments, etc., have needed to occur. Reviews have been critical in establishing clarity and transparency about what we all understand about what we all do here at work every day. Ultimately, the PQ and performance reviews are

designed to help employees do their jobs better. Barbara indicated that President Glotzabach is fully supportive of staff reviews. He conducts them with cabinet staff every year. The president also receives an annual report from Human Resources on the current state of reviews on campus that, among other factors, indicates where reviews are / are not being conducted on campus.

Conversation then shifted to particular questions about promotions, equity and job title changes. Barbara noted that a position with the same administrative job title (i.e., “manager”) does not necessarily fall into the same salary band across departments and divisions. A number of criteria is used to calculate compensation drawing on factors such as Federal Government guidelines, geographical location (urban versus rural location), and comparable job descriptions in higher education. As far as salary, it is given a score based on a point-factor category. The total score added up situates a position within a band. Surveys of jobs are conducted to match jobs on campus and then put each into a salary range. The band is calculated with two parts: the committee review and Nancy Bruno’s confidential review (which calculates the salary figure).

Another question pertained to items being added to one’s PQ, presumably by the manager and not necessarily with the “buy in” or approval of the employee, and whether the employee has the choice to accept it without knowing if there will be a salary raise. If you’re told you are getting a promotion, and that you accept the new responsibilities as vetted by the manager and department head, and with the assistance of Human Resources,

then you should get a raise once the PQ is reviewed within six months. Human Resources assists the PQ review committees in helping to establish equity for updated PQs that includes job title changes and promotions. However the PQ review committees are not involved in any conversation about salary adjustment – that is up to Human Resources. If new items are added to the PQ (or removed), a recommendation from a consulting firm Human Resources has contracted with, is to evaluate and re-assess the job description and adjust compensation accordingly after six months. This explains why sometimes people get a promotion and are asked to take on new responsibilities, including being promoted to management, and may receive a raise after the change is made to the PQ and job title within up to six months later. Note: it's not guaranteed a raise, or reduction, occurs when items are added or removed from the PQ. In response to a question about who writes the PQ, if it's a re-organization or department re-alignment, the manager writes it because it's based on *operational* needs. Otherwise, the employee writes it. In many cases, the employee knows what is required of his/her job description because he/she has expertise in that area that is not readily assessed by a manager without extensive knowledge of the skill set or expertise of the employee being evaluated. This may explain some cases in which reviews are not occurring as often as they should be. In response to another question, Barbara recommend that staff check the percentage distribution of time the PQ says they are to allocate and spend on a job description item at least once every eighteen months. If anyone needs a current copy of the PQ, Barbara asks that you send an email to

Terri. Human Resources has a copy of every staff PQ on record. Barbara concluded that the conversation indicates how important the management training and certification program is for supervisors.

Despite higher education industry expectations that advanced degrees may be recommended and in some cases required for some staff positions, i.e., a terminal degree such as a PhD, this is not a factor when calculating salary. The rationale here is that that job expectations and salary should not be overinflated. If the bar is set to high with degree certification requirement, it could diminish the pool of applicants on campus who may have other attractive attributes and skills, but not a terminal or advanced degree.

2). A discussion of the [latest strategic plan draft](#).

Joshua Woodfork thanked all staff for their contributions to the draft. He provided background about the drafting and completion process. In its final draft, its approval will be put to a vote before several campus constituencies. The IPPC will vote on December 4, 2015. Between now and then, it will be introduced as New Business at an upcoming Faculty Meeting and then the faculty will vote on February 5, 2016. Once voted and approved by faculty at the Faculty Meeting, it will be presented to the Board of Trustees, most likely in the latter part of February 2016.

Joshua echoed the President's request to make the input process inclusive by soliciting feedback and suggestions from the Student Government Association (SGA) and all staff, in particular the Staff

Advisory Group (SAG). He indicated that the President would be grateful for an endorsement from the SAG of the strategic plan, but is not asking for approval which, operationally by the institutional understanding of shared governance, would imply a vote will have taken place and would henceforth be binding between staff and the administration. Joshua asked the group to consider an endorsement. While members of the SAG can't really vote officially on behalf of the staff, a concern was voiced that an endorsement may not readily translate into a representative voice of all staff as a result. Still, an endorsement means that the SAG supports the strategic plan, even if there are concerns about its contents or wording in its current form in the draft. Joshua asked if the staff see themselves as represented with a voice in the current draft. A search of the document, projected on the screen, indicated the word, "staff," came up twenty-nine times. The Staff Advisory Group is mentioned twice. One particular passage specifically mentioned the Staff Advisory Group under the section Human Resources: Managing Alignment, on page on page 21, near the top. There was concern that current wording in the draft had changed from a previous version and the SAG indicated that this wording is not yet endorsable. Joshua asked the SAG to make suggestions for the wording and to submit it in writing for consideration.

After more conversation about the wording, the SAG agreed to submit improvements and wording change that affirms itself not just as short term experimental pilot, but rather and more importantly, as a standing/permanent structure.

Joshua also mentioned that the inclusion of new items addressing

steps being taken to ensure “Wellness/well-being for students and all employees” is very important. Student input via the SGA indicates a wish for the Administration to allocate resources that focus more on sexual misconduct and diversity. Joshua and Lisa indicated that co-curricular item needs more input under Goal 3. Joshua indicated that there is a need for more cohesive alignment of these initiatives reference elsewhere in the plan, and that staff input could help here. Lisa Christensen shared that in the self-study there is a focus on developing and augmenting the role that recognizes the role that staff play in connecting with students, especially in co-curricular areas. Joshua ended by echoing the President’s wish for staff to feel more empowered by helping to building and increase trust and respect for everyone on campus. This inclusiveness aligns with a defining attribute of Skidmore, namely that we do not seek to instill uniformity across the College, that we value variety, diversity and inclusiveness in ways go against a widely held perception shared by many in higher education that institutions are being corporatized.

3). Do we want to have a social event for staff, similar to the Friday afternoon social after faculty meetings?

We will discuss this at the next meeting scheduled for Jan 27, 2016 3-4 PM.