

Minutes of FAP Meeting #17 AY2020-21

December 9, 2020

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Meeting Held Electronically via ZOOM

Members in Attendance: Joseph Fehribach (FAP Chair), George Pins (RPC Representative), Mike Radzicki (FBC Chair), Jeff Solomon (Executive Vice President/CFO), David Spanagel (FAP Secretary), Kris Sullivan (Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs)

Guests: Michelle Jones-Johnson (Vice President for Talent and Inclusion/CDO), Alicia Mills (Associate Vice President of Talent and Organizational Effectiveness)

Call to Order. Chair Fehribach called the 17th FAP meeting of the year to order at 4:02 PM.

1) **Update from Talent and Inclusion.** VP/CDO Jones-Johnson updated FAP on on her division's array of responsibilities (which include Human Resource Services, Talent Partner Support for Division/Department Leadership, Talent Engagement, Institutional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, including the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Divisional Effectiveness, and WPI's Title IX office).

She also shared a slide which previewed the Talent and Inclusion division's strategic plan, which seeks to "build capacity," "enhance WPI's [workplace] culture," "focus on talent," and "strengthen visibility and reputation." When the strategic plan launches in early in 2021, the division intends to prepare for an employee survey later in the year or early 2022.

AVP Mills introduced herself to those members of the committee she had not previously met, and she described the current focus of her efforts to better assess community needs and improve service quality, internal operations, talent recruitment and retention at WPI.

2) **FAP Questions/Comments for Talent and Inclusion.** FAP members asked a number of questions. These included:

a) How does the Office of General Counsel and the Division of Talent and Inclusion interact (given the fact that they share overlapping responsibilities in the areas of risk assessment and compliance)? Both VP/CDO Jones-Johnson and AVP Mills emphasized the collaboration that prevails between the divisions, and noted how the OGC oversees risk and compliance issues for the university as a whole (whereas TI

focuses on just those areas that fall within its scope of responsibilities). Mills added that the OGC also provides comparisons to how other institutions of higher education manage similar issues.

- b) Who is WPI's Title IX Coordinator now? Answer: John Stewart. His office is located in the Student Affairs suite of offices on the second floor of the Rubin Campus Center.
- c) How does "service quality and effectiveness" get measured; what are the metrics? Both VP/CDO Jones-Johnson and AVP Mills talked about reducing response times to initial inquiries, and persisting until issues/concerns are resolved.
- d) What have been the biggest steps forward so far, that Talent and Inclusion can claim credit for fostering in this effort to improve internal operations? VP/CDO Jones-Johnson noted that response times to their Dovetail HR Case Management System which generates "tickets" have been markedly reduced, as a start. The system allows for significant internal measurement of operational effectiveness through the ability to track initial response times and how long it may take to fully resolve an issue.
 - i) This comment triggered a side discussion about the explosion of tickets this year, mostly with respect to IT requests and course registration questions. One FAP member was distressed by the frequency with which the essential pieces of information and context for a reported problem or inquiry get stripped away from the "ticket" so that the person who eventually responds to the inquiry cannot clearly appreciate either the urgency or the significance of the issue that needs to be addressed.
 - ii) AVP Mills noted how, despite these unfortunate situations (which she urges us to persist in pursuing a desirable outcome even if the initial response is frustrating), the case management or "ticketing" system itself becomes a valuable mechanism through which our various administrative functions can more effectively lobby for (and appropriately channel) additional resources that are needed to serve the whole community. CFO Solomon confirmed that this is an important aspect of WPI's commitment (especially as the organization grows in both size and complexity) to be more data-driven in its decision-making.
- e) How, in the context of institutional growth and our increasing reliance upon impersonal systems like Workday to process all of our internal communications, can we hope to preserve (or even restore) the sense of human connection that once characterized faculty and staff interactions across our academic departments and administrative divisions? AVP Mills agreed that this human dimension is an essential one to address. She indicated that she will be asking the Talent Partners to get out and meet with the communities that they support during the coming year (whenever that may be done safely). She also hopes that members of the WPI community will soon come to know her, and recognize her face around the campus.

- f) FBC Chair Radzicki outlined some of the preliminary agenda items that FBC hopes to take up (in some cases, resume working on) later this year. Several of these items require support and communications with HR or TI, such as the 24 vs. 28 hrs/week benefits eligibility discussion, the summer work hours flexibility proposal, and establishing an ongoing group that monitors and informs the community more effectively about the rapidly evolving health care benefits universe. He believes that the self-contained annual “Open Enrollment Fair” tradition is no longer sufficient to effectively educate and counsel each employee regarding their own situation and the array of options among which they have to choose. VP/CDO Jones-Johnson pledged to work with Radzicki to get those FBC agenda items the attention and/or information they will need from her division. AVP Mills noted with pleasure that 75+ people took advantage of the 15-minute one-on-one benefits counseling session slots, and that more will be planned for next year.
- g) One FAP member shared a problematic experience he had this summer regarding hurdles and delays in the Workday HR approval process for hiring a part-time lab assistant. AVP Sullivan chimed into that discussion and noted that a key element of expedited success has to do with whether the staff person who initiates the Workday process does so correctly. He added that the Academic Affairs division is looking into building up a core group of people who have acquired an expertise in handling those processes so that hiring requests can be referred to a staff member who knows exactly how to initiate the HR process in Workday without incurring such difficulties.
- 3) **Brief Update on Covid/budget.** CFO Solomon expressed relief and satisfaction that we made it through B term so successfully with our TechFlex approach to maintaining in-person academic experiences while minimizing virus exposures and containing the spread of the disease. He noted that bills for the Spring semester will be going out on December 14, and that all signs currently look good for the planned reopening of the campus in time for safe onboarding and the full resumption of C term/spring semester TechFlex academic activities on January 28, 2021.
- 4) **Approval of Minutes.** Having exceeded our appointed meeting time already by a healthy margin, the committee did not take up the question of approving its minutes from the December 2, 2020 meeting. These will instead be taken up at our next meeting, early in the new calendar year.
- 5) **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Spanagel
FAP Secretary