Labor-Management Notes

September 18th, 2023

In Attendance

Labor: David Banks, Marco Varisco, Paul Stasi, Michael Dzikowski, Michelle Couture
Management: Steve Galime, Gary Evans, Justine Ochs, Keiffer Peralta, Jeanette Altaribba, Erin Bell, Vicky Rizzo

Agenda Item Discussion

1. Mergers. We are inquiring into the proposed mergers of LACS and African Studies and the SSW and SPH. In both cases, faculty have raised significant and repeated objections to these proposals. We are asking about the academic and intellectual rationales for the mergers since the absence of these rationales is part of faculty's skepticism. Faculty are also unclear how these organizational changes will by themselves lead to increased research opportunities. Given that, in the case of the two CAS departments, resources are one of the key issues, what new resources will become available to the merged department that aren't available to them in their current form? Finally, we are curious to know the implications of these mergers for our professional faculty, both in terms of workload and loss of positions, given how common it has been not to replace departing or retiring staff across campus.
L: Are the mergers supported by Faculty?
M: The departments will still have distinct identities.
There is a concern about how word got around as to how people feel about this merger. Those that addressed the letter to Senate – one being senior faculty is 25% and is out the door, but the other senior faculty member is feeling that the other Senior Faculty are bullying them into signing the letter. Junior Faculty - feel like they are being bullied into signing the letter.
M: SSW - faculty names were added to the letter without their consent. The deans would be willing to read a statement that is being made to the College; however, there seems to be a coercive element.
M: Donor letter - donors were not in favor, this is not accurate. The letter from the donor is ultimately in favor, but one sentence was pulled out of context.

M: SSW - overall, the letter was a bit negative to the SSW school

L: Full professor letter account is from a different process (people can be taken off).

L: Full professors would have more autonomy where junior faculty would have a fear of speaking out.

L: The feeling from the faculty is that there is no point, they wouldn't be listened to.

M: SSW Faculty didn't feel that there would be retaliation from Provost.

M: (Regarding the coercive element): Faculty want this to be a transparent process. Want shared governance guidance. Timing isn't the best, but the faculty want to be part of the process.

L: The report that was issued by the two departments was balanced and clear about the statements made. The opportunities were vague, but the statements in opposition appear to be more concrete. It seems that the announcement by the Provost makes it seem that the statements were in favor instead of discussing the opposition.

L: This is on the heels of the CRJ integration. People are drawing conclusions based on seeming lack of vision.

M: They will create the mission, vision, structure, and name of the college with a consultant. A shared concern is that there be one dean due to accrediting body concerns. Joint webinar would be held to discuss how this will be completed. Bylaws and governance would need to be updated along with MoU with DoH.

M: Feedback from other colleges (outside of the University) has been overall positive; however, there was a divorce of the SSW and SPH programs after 10 years (St. Lois).

M: Both CSEA and UUP are impacted.

M: Semantics is critical - this isn't a "merger". SPH - program in nursing, additional programming will be created within this model. New college of health professions (name) would be thought of together. SSW will be continuing to be a SSW - they are working it out as to the requirements from the PH accreditation boards.

M: Individual department websites - hard to find on other campuses. They want to make sure that we don't have that issue at UA. Each of the schools and departments need to have their own mission and vision. It would be wrong to not have the faculty and staff contribute to the Mission and Vision.

L: It would be appropriate to have mission and vision discussed in public fora respective to the departments.

L: Fundamental question from SSW would be autonomy, instead of having SPH dean reporting to Provost and the SSW director reporting to SPH dean. There may be cascading effects due to the same issues from CRJ.

M: SPH dean - people worry about workload doubling; SSW dean - people worry about losing their jobs.

M: Looking to have things transparent and have discussions. Asking SEC about what should be the process for shared governance. SSW did lose two lines, but they would be coming back. One person came out of retirement, and they have been working to ensure that they have the support that they need.

M: SSW and SPH people are working together now - marketing person from SSW is going on maternity leave, so they are working with SPH to ensure that the work is covered.

L: That is exactly the concern - workload would be combined

M: Workload would be monitored and adjusted. Discussing service obligations with faculty and staff to get ideas on how to move forward.

M: Last fall, SSW revised bylaws to reduce the size of committees that represent various programs. This has reduced the workload.

M: If people feel that workload is increasing, the planning is commencing, and if new positions are required, the Provost will be discussed and considered for future allocations. Provost would like this to be successful.

L: Shared governance - union and faculty meetings should be a place to discuss concerns. There may be some conflict around the statement of Shared Governance; however, to reiterate - a possibility that becomes something that is definitely happening creates suspicion.

M: There is an accrediting body that requires that for SPHs have to have a dean that reports to provost, it cannot be a director that reports to a dean that reports to provost.

M: Erin is going to have a phone call to find that the SPH dean must exist due to this "requirement" - they'll have meetings with the various accrediting bodies to discuss their concerns with open for all.

M: They need to see where the regulation is in writing to discuss SSW/SPH deanship to review concerns from people in the department.

M: SSW must have budget autonomy based on accreditation requirements.

M: Other colleges that have this combination are named Public Health in part (though this is being reviewed).

M: Dean could be from any of the professions within the division, not a specific discipline.

L: Engagement with faculty where questions were answered would be helpful to address the faculty concerns; however, due to the pace/lack of discussions, there are tensions between SPH/SSW faculty. 1. Would be helpful to know what collaborative approaches are not enabled currently with two departments/divisions. 2. Cost cutting is the assumed rationale. 3. Find means to discuss their concerns without retaliation or shutting down. Our bread and butter is to raise questions and discuss them in public sphere as Academics.

M: We are hearing different things from different people, both L&M. An anonymous question box could be created and discuss the questions. Engagement within the communities is something both SSW and SPH teach.

L: Ideas from the Provost as to why there is a desire to integrate these departments?

M: Provost and above have a vision. Changes in leadership along with discussions with health disparities have brought these department's goals to the fore. Enrollment landscape has decreased for both departments, and this would allow the departments to possibly grow together. Provost asked Deans to look at the feedback for integrating the department and found no evidence of showstoppers that are game-changers.

M: On-Campus Synergies: Both schools have ideas about similar things and this could help to drive discussions. There are departments which are hidden in labs, no one should be marginalized based on the visibility.

M: There is no secret that we haven't had a great time "post-COVID" for enrollment. Institution and union partners should work together.

L: What is the name of the external consultant?

M: Annie Merkel is beginning today and is working out to May 31.

L: Is there any reason we cannot meet Annie?

M: Will check with Provost - there is stakeholder engagement discussion time in the contract, but need to discuss with Provost that L can talk directly with Annie.

L: Some discussions on quelching on free-speech have been thought of on both sides of the argument - faculty concerns of union involvement, and faculty concerns about being shut down by management.

M: University is not looking to reduce free speech.

L: It is improper to have any quelching of free speech - we need to ensure that this is reviewed on both sides. Possibly assignment of a delegate to be the Union spokesperson regarding SSW/SPH new colleges.

M: Meetings engage former MC, current union, non-union, etc.

L: Union speech is protected speech regardless of who is in the room.

L: Is faculty okay with LACS/African merger, how has the resourcing been?

M: Change is challenging - people would prefer to not have these types of change. They hear that the word "merger" may also be loaded - maybe "join".

M: LACS and Africana - one department has only 5 full-time students (exclusive of those in minors). There is a new scholar who discusses LACS and Africana - interested in discussing these concerns of integrating. Some may be aspirational and non-peer; however, there may be lessons for the faculty to learn. No one of the faculty have addressed to the CAS dean. It is looked at as a collaboration. If anyone wants to speak to CAS dean, they are more than welcome to do so. Even the Dean was a little concerned originally as they come from LACS for decades, but they are not opposed to the joining of the LACS/Africana studies. As there are more people, the positions of grad director, undergrad director, scheduler, etc. are not going to be done by three faculty members wearing 4-5 hats when people are together. There is a donor in the wings waiting to give after the new structure has been established.

L: Working together might be positive *if* there are new resources brought to the fore, it is a concern if they are starved similar to current situation. Rather than blaming departments for their low enrollments, hold them up and give them resources to help their enrollments - avoid a death spiral where students don't come due to no classes and there are no classes due to no students.

M: Dean is enthusiastic about the integration. Students now represent more than one thing - this will provide the ability to explore the intersection of LACS and AS. Students are not in one box, but in multiple.

L: Diversity is important not simply as a buzzword but as a concrete principle in terms of hiring and the programs that are supported.

L: Disheartening as director of globalization studies that there are so many classes that are being taken off of the schedule.

M: Will bring back thoughts to the Provost. Looking at the landscape to see what can be created between the two. What is unique that they want to do together. Make the campus successful. They understand the concerns about the process and that it doesn't impact people in a negative way.

M: A vision doesn't have all of the answers. Infighting can be destructive. Differences between what L and M are hearing are concerning. Erin and Vicky are working together to ensure that the road forward is positive.

L: ALR issue due to matleave

M: Temporary hire can help with the workload due to the Matleave issue

2. Extra-Service pay for courses. We are asking about the current rates paid for extra service pay for courses. We believe these rates, including the pay for winter and summer sessions, should follow the graduated increase in per course/adjunct pay as has historically been the practice on this campus.
L: Would ES pay raise in accordance with the contracted rates for other adjuncts?
M: Past practice should continue

3. Appointment Letters. We have been told that SUNY has given guidance to campuses that this fall's appointment letters should account for the new contract's extended term appointments (for both part-time and full-time faculty). We are asking if the campus will be following this guidance. Will the part-time contingent faculty with more than 3 years consecutive teaching be given fall appointments of 1 year, and will full-time Lecturers, Clinical Faculty, Research Faculty with more than 7 years consecutive teaching be appointed on 3-year terms starting this fall?
L: Is this happening?
M: Some may - there is no directive from SUNY *yet* that they get 1-year letter. They strongly suggested the 1-year letters be granted. Ratification happened after the letters were written and after some start dates, etc.
L: Appointments should be one year for this year or due to the nature of the appointment?
M: SUNY says that it should be 1-year and we need to figure out the logistics of ensuring that Spring isn't the start of that 1-year as it would make the agreements off-schedule for the Academic Year. Waiting on more guidance from SUNY.
L: If letter looks wrong - should it just be what is going on through SUNY?
M: It depends on the nature of the question, but there will be information regarding this soon.

4. Reorganization of the Library: We are returning to this item from last Spring. Are there any updates on the ongoing library reorganization, specifically as it pertains to job duties and obligations for our library members?
M: Carey interim dean reports that any supervisor changes have happened, several of the UUP librarians who have had stipends have had that put into their base, promotions are in HR now (in class/comp). Developing workgroups to look at peer institutions. Metrics for assessment are being created. Gap analysis for additional resources. Technology reviewed - since this is Carey's area, they will be looking into this.
L: Management has the right to restructure. Is it okay to review reports to report on findings.
M: There is no reason that the Library faculty cannot share
L: Updates to library website are not made
M: Org chart will be updated
L: Will there be in-position reclassifications?
M: Yes
L: Will there be promotional positions being made?
M: Will check
L: As there was a stipend and this is now rolled into their work, it is no longer voluntarily
M: It is the understanding that people were happy to have it rolled into their requirements

5. Contingent faculty contact information. I understand this was discussed last year, but the transition to Brightspace has created some significant increase in course prep which falls hardest on our contingent faculty. In particular, there are a small number of faculty who regularly only teach one semester and thus do not receive university communication during their off-semesters. We are wondering if there might be some way for the university to maintain ties with those contingents during their off-semesters.

M: About how many people are there?

L: We don't have that information. As the people don't look at their email as they are not on commitment, their department chair would be an alternative form of communication. Direct emails from CATLOE, etc.

L: Person still had their email; however, they are shut out from other University systems, including Brightspace.

L: We now have additional rights to data, so we can discuss further internally.

M: Willing to work with L on determining who these people are.

The following come from Professionals

6. ODI Requirements concurrent searches: Returning to our conversation about concurrent searches, we are asking for clarification about the ODI requirements in place for internal and external searches. Are they the same? And if not, how is this managed for a concurrent search?

M: What do you mean by ODI requirements?

L: Lively discussion in EC brought up that ODI requirements are different internally vs externally

M: They are the same - search committee staffing (chair, ODI, etc.) are being made. Size of pool is different. Andrea (soon to be someone else) is going to review those who submit internally. Materials are sent to the chair of the materials - they then make decisions about how to move forward.

L: Internal candidates are not required to use the rubric

M: Really? They should absolutely be using the rubric.

L: Is there wiggle room with the internal?

M: They may be known people, but the experience of multiple internal candidates should be the same on a single search.

L: Approved list of questions has been after internal posting.

M: They should be using the same questions.

L: We appreciate the additional outlining of the requirements of the search process

L: Details on internal searches should be laid out and are not currently on the site.

7. Data on concurrent searches: We are also requesting data on concurrent searches for professionals. How many internal promotional postings where there in the last five years? What % of these postings were also concurrent? What % of these concurrent postings eventually went to internal candidates?

L: Feeling that individuals are not getting a fair shake

M: Shared between ODI and HR, but cannot look back 5 years

M: 8 internal hires from concurrent searches, 6 since May of 2023

M: This involves manual crosschecking, but it is something good to know - will review workload requirements of the HR personnel to collect such data as Interview Exchange is not very robust

8. Promotion from SL3 to SL4: We are seeking clarification about HR's criteria for the promotion of an SL3 to an SL4. There seems some inconsistency across units; the issue becomes more pressing as staff take on additional responsibilities due to shortage of employees and, therefore, seek these kinds of promotions.

M: This is not necessarily true. This is a case by case basis. Not all SL3 and SL4 are the same. Not all SL3 and SL4 supervise. A lot of compensable factors as to where to go into 1-6. For example, we don't effectively use SL1 at UAlbany

M: Review MACCC standards will need to take place

Review comparable within the unit or across campus

3 to 4 - significant increase between work responsibilities, though is a range of factors

M: Not all units are created equal

Updates from M

Computers: All but one AA unit has something in place for replacing computers (policy and tracking). One unit fell off of doing this due to changes in the offices, but will be returning due to doing so - include administrative support units.

Weather communication: Haven't forgotten about this - they are reviewing and tweaking before sending out to L for review. Since Saturday is officially Fall, there is a clock on this effort.

Suggestions for DSI process: They are waiting for L review and notes. They are looking at setting up these workflows soon.

Mandatory training: Coming soon with an extra one. An introductory email will be sent out soon. JCOPE ethics is now being required - live instructor-led course as a large Zoom webinar Hannah from the HR office will be doing this. Should be 2 hours, but delivering 60-75 minutes - sending email out about this soon

Every other year to ensure people know that people have their knowledge kept up to date as to what is. Four refresher courses have been created on-campus to become a self-guided PowerPoint

Members who have received training elsewhere can reach out to Hannah in HR and they can be accepted

Onboarding: Would like to have people start on the first day of a pay period. Set schedule of trainings throughout the year. Trying to make orientation more wholistic to training, ID card, parking pass, etc. Bring people around campus to ensure that people feel better part of the community.

Discussion on Enrollment Targets and Budgeting

L: Enrollment targets - retention, 22% of the class is on Academic Probation.

M: Can include JoAnne Malatesta and others to discuss, Todd for budget information in a future meeting.

Submitted by Michael Dzikowski