

# Faculty and Professional Affairs Committee

## 2009 Spring Professional Forum Summary

On Wednesday, February 18, 2009 the Faculty and Professional Affairs Committee held a Professionals Forum to provide an open discussion on issues concerning the professional staff. The Forum was attended by 14 people.

There were several topics brought up at the forum, this summary reflects the opinions of the professional staff in attendance and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the committee. A summary of the discussions separated by topic, in no particular order, follows:

**Consistency between Divisions:** Since the professional staff are split among the four Vice Presidents there are notable differences in the business practices of each division. This is an umbrella topic that covers all of the topics following. Each division handles these issues differently and inconsistently, even within each division. This has a negative effect on morale as a professional in one division is working under different conditions than those in another division.

**Work/Life Balance:** There was a significant amount of discussion over the inflexibility of some departments and the effects this has on morale. Some departments claim “comp time does not exist” while others recognize Appendix A-29 of the UUP contract and offer compensatory time off on a mutually agreeable basis.

**Professional Development:** Supervisors need to allow professional staff to attend development offerings on and off campus during work hours. The lunch hour is personal time and should not always be taken up by work-related activities. Professional development should be encouraged and supported, both financially and without charges to time accruals, at all levels.

**Value Professional Achievements:** Achievements such as certifications and advanced degrees should be recognized. There is a sense of futility when a staff member with an Associate’s degree is earning more than someone with a Master’s degree.

**Morale:** We are on the same team, yet there is often a feeling of “working for somebody rather than working with somebody.” Negative attitudes of some faculty and administration towards professional staff are demoralizing. Professional staff are looked upon as servants and not as professionals.

**Promotion Opportunities:** There is no clear path of promotion for professional staff. Information is often confusing or contradictory. Administrative promises are vague and often not followed through.

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**Hostile Work Environment:** There is a real fear of retribution from supervisors and administration among the professional staff. Many refuse to speak out or formally address problems for fear of losing their job or being subject to other forms of harassment. Promotions may be promised but never granted but even when there is a clear case that a promotion is warranted the staff member is afraid to stand up for their rights.

**Conservative Culture:** There is an institutional unwillingness to change, an ultra-conservative/old-fashioned attitude permeates the college. There is a desire for forward looking leadership. We need to be more open to change.

**Travel Funds:** There is no consistent way of securing funds to attend conferences or other professional development travel. Some departments get preferential treatment when it comes to disbursing funds. Part time employees feel left out of having the opportunity to attend conferences.

**Workload Increases:** There is a constant increase to services offered and staff workload but there is never an increase in staff to offset this increase in workload. These workload increases spill over into personal time; that is especially detrimental to those areas where comp time is not recognized. Again, due to the hostile work environment, staff are afraid to complain and just take work home with them, stay late, and come in early. Promotional opportunities for taking on more duties are infrequent or "title only" in that there is no increase to base salary.

**Information Repository:** There was an expressed need for a central repository of information where professional staff could find information regarding promotion, attaining permanency, and other information.

**Evaluation:** The evaluation process for staff is sometimes unclear. How can supervisors and staff work together to ensure the staff member is doing what is required for a satisfactory evaluation.

**Staff Searches:** Staff search committees are not given adequate instructions. The 102 page faculty search manual does not apply to professionals and is out of date. Committee's hands are tied at every step of the process and they cannot even make recommendations or final decisions. There has been coercion by administration to interview candidates that the committee did not feel were as qualified as other applicants. Since the committee can't make a recommendation and the decisions are made by administration anyway there is a feeling of futility among committee members.

**Merit Pay:** There is a feeling of inequity in regards to the distribution of DSI.