

PSO General Meeting
Wednesday, November 4, 2009
2:00 pm, OM 340

SUMMARY MEETING NOTES

Meeting Facilitator: PSO President Sue Hoidal

Guest Speaker: Chyerl Wolfe-Lee, Director of Human Resources

Attendance: Twenty-nine pro staff attended.

Reminder: Ergonomic workstation evaluations are provided by Bruce Boyer in Environmental Health and Safety, for free and he can also arrange for short-term loans of ergonomic equipment to try out. Purchases of equipment, however, must be made by the employee's department.

Purpose of the meeting: discuss ideas provided by pro staff regarding potential non-monetary benefits and/or resources, and the feasibility of implementing them.

Pro Staff Ideas

1. *Staff use of Wade King Recreation Center or having a Family Night there at discount rates.*
The Center was built and is funded through student fees, making it difficult to provide discount rates for employees. Employees can purchase memberships on a quarterly (\$105 + tax), academic (\$285 + tax), or annual (\$380 + tax) rate. The comment was made that the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center would be a cheaper option for occasional use.

This idea does fit well with the Wellness Program that HR Benefits now oversees. The program is still being revised, including having guest speakers and providing free consultations/assessments to achieve personal fitness goals. The assessments are private and confidential, with follow ups to check on how you are doing.

2. *Free sports tickets*
Many of the events are free and there are already discounts available depending on seating selection for indoor events such as basketball.
3. *Reduce employee bus pass price to student's rate*
The employee pays \$25 per quarter, whereas the students pay \$22. The difference in rates is negligible and considered equitable. The university does subsidize the bus pass program to make it affordable to both students and employees.
4. *Free library use for retirees*
This is already in place.
5. *On-line want ads for employees*

Faculty have recently set up a University “Craig’s” list of places to stay for visiting faculty. The same mechanism could be used for want ads for all employees. Challenges are: who/what department would manage the list, what criteria would be used to set the format and content of the want ads, how long they would be posted, etc. It is a good idea, though and will take resources to set up and maintain. If this is something employees want then contact Sue Hoidal.

6. *Increase rate of buy-back on sick leave accrued at retirement*
The state has set the buy-back rate at 25% of total accrued sick leave and it would be difficult to change. Moreover, since Western’s classified and pro staff participate in the VEBA Post Retirement Medical Benefit program they are not able to cash out the 25% of their sick leave. It is rolled over (tax free) into a VEBA account the retiring employee sets up ahead of time and the funds can then be used for medical, dental, and vision care until the money runs out. See http://www.acadweb.wvu.edu/hr/benefits/VEBA/VEBA_index.shtml for more information about the program.
7. *Provide discounted meal tickets*
Employees already get an 18% discount if they use their munch money card. Moreover the cost of the food is tax free when the card is used, resulting in further savings to the employee.
8. *Provide a Roth 403(b) option (in addition to the TIAA CREF Supplemental Retirement option*
Western has just sent out an RFP (Request for Proposals) to hire a consultant that would investigate the feasibility of implementing such a program here. If the report is favorable Western may have this as an option later in 2010.
9. *Promotions for classified staff to open pro staff positions.*
Any employee has the right to apply for an open position, whether s/he is classified, pro staff, or faculty. Western does not “promote” classified or pro staff, but it does reclassify positions. The employee in that reclassified position receives a title change and compensation reflecting the change in the position description.
10. *Increase the 240 hour limit on accrued vacation leave.*
In 2008, 65 pro staff (out of ~380) forfeited vacation leave, averaging 69 hours per pro staff due to vacation leave balances in excess of the 240 hour limit that were not used before the employee’s anniversary date. As of August 2009, there were 15 pro staff that have forfeited vacation leave averaging 64 hours each, with 4 getting extensions. Since pro staff are not taking the leave they are currently accruing it doesn’t make sense to lobby the State to increase the limit.
11. *Address significant increases in healthcare costs.*
Western is working with the other institutions and lobbying in Olympia to keep healthcare costs down. Reduced state revenues because of the recession, along with an aging workforce placing more demands on the healthcare system have driven up costs. The federal healthcare reform bill being put forward is still being revised and its effect on healthcare costs are still unknown if it does pass.

12. *Miscellaneous topics and questions from the audience:*

- The Employee Recognition Program is changing and will be an ongoing program, not a once or twice a year award program. The Award program is also being changed and will include both faculty and staff. Changes should start to be implemented in the coming year.
- EPAS (Employee Performance Analysis System) is an electronic job performance appraisal software program that will be used to evaluate administrators and pro staff, though there is potential for it to be used to evaluate faculty. It is currently being piloted and the linkage of EPAS with compensation is expected to be completed next year as well.
- New Employee Orientation is now provided online. Presentations are on Blackboard and allow the new employee to take it anywhere on or off campus. It is about 2 hours in length.
- Department of Personnel (DOP) Professional Development Training. DOP was on campus providing several training modules. The PSO Executive Committee is accepting requests from pro staff for additional DOP training modules to bring to campus.
- Elizabeth Monahan, Manager of Labor Relations in HR, has accepted a position with the Port of Bellingham and will be leaving Western.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm

Submitted by April Markiewicz

Approved March 17, 2010