

Comments Received from Staff – October 2007

In September 2007 Staff Council asked staff members to submit questions, concerns, priorities, or suggestions to Staff Council to help in the identification of campus priorities. This document is a summary of the written comments submitted to Staff Council and how Staff Council has responded to the feedback. A summary of comments from the October 2007 Staff Council forums is available at http://www2.iwu.edu:82/facresources/council/SC-Forum_oct_07.pdf

See *Staff Council Minutes from November and December 2007* for more information about how these comments were addressed. <http://www2.iwu.edu:82/facresources/council/>

Communication

Comments from Staff:

- REMAINS an important issue of focus.
- Communication issues in general.
- Campus weekly is a great start as a form of communication that goes to most faculty/staff, but I believe people can opt not to get this. I'm wondering if the opt out could change so everyone receives it and it is their choice whether they choose to read it or not. This holds individuals accountable as they have received information. I hope a hard copy is sent to those who do not receive email.
- Campus Weekly is an improvement in communication. How about adding staff recognition including employment anniversary dates, birthdays, new births, marriages, etc. Or maybe a quarterly newsletter with that information as well as upcoming opportunities for staff (fitness, conferences, training, etc.)
- Mandate transparency and communication from administrative offices. Timely response to concerns.
- Improve internal communication.
- The number one issue for the entire campus, not just staff, should be communication. It has to improve. Either we get no information before a benefit is changed or we get the wrong information. It seems that it should be such a simple item to improve upon but yet it seems to be getting worse.

How has Staff Council addressed?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9/07 – Staff Council Memo* to President regarding importance of communication.• 10/07 – Staff Council Memo* to Staff• 10/07- Staff Council Forum• 11/07 – Meeting with President Wilson• 2/08- Staff Council Memo* to Staff |
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*See http://www2.iwu.edu:82/facresources/council/reports_memos.shtml

Handbooks

Comments from Staff

- Updated handbooks and policies should be available in both written and electronic format.
- Clearly defined and articulated policies (paper and electronic).

How has Staff Council addressed?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11/07; 12/07 – Staff Council meeting with President Wilson.• 12/07 – Staff Council stressed importance of an updated handbook. President Wilson responded he is continuing to explore options on the handbook and has already had discussions with Cathy Spitz, Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Dan Klotzbach, Vice President for Business and Finance. |
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Orientation

Comments from Staff

- New staff employees should receive formal orientation and training.
- An orientation program would be helpful for new employees... I'm talking about a campus tour, who do I call when I have a work order, if I need to order a key, if my desk chair is not working for me, where can I grab lunch on campus. These would be the kinds of information you could get from an orientation.
- Orientation: Organizational hierarchy chart, vision/mission statement cards sent to all staff, greening of the campus, diversity, peer mentoring, review procedures.
- Job Related Training: Peer mentoring, review procedures, time-management skills, cross training in key areas; IWU "float" staff, skills analysis and assessment
- Clearly defined and articulated policies (paper and electronic)
- Organizational hierarchy chart; vision/mission statement cards sent to all staff; greening of the campus; diversity. peer mentoring, review procedures.
- Inform staff of unknown benefits: Bookstore discount (40% if buying apparel for work); Music lessons and sport camps for kids 50% off.

How has Staff Council addressed?

- 11/07 - President Wilson has asked Mona Gardner to work with the Human Resources Department to develop an expanded new staff orientation program.
- 11/07 – President Wilson supports a peer mentoring program and suggests this may be something Staff Council can sponsor.
- 1/08 – A Staff Council subcommittee was created to discuss development of a peer mentoring program.
- 1/08 – Mona Gardner is working on new employee Orientation program for staff. An outline of a program was presented to Staff Council.

Merit Pay

Comments from Staff

- Don't have a workable merit raise system.
- One can easily foresee that this will lead to people being "priced" out of their grade level because some staff will receive the merit raise more than others. This does not mean other employees are not deserving of a merit raise. If the university has enough money for merit raises, why not just increase the percentage of the annual salary across the board. Look at the history of merit based raises for faculty. The faculty voted to eliminate them. This should tell the administration something about the merit of merit based raises.
- I am wondering what the plan is for evaluations for exempt staff and if merit increases will be applied as well.
- Instead of hard-earned and very limited merit pay, consider a financial reward system for employees who discover new money-saving procedures or otherwise contribute to campus well-being. This wouldn't have to be regularly awarded—just whenever some truly noteworthy contribution was made.
- Recognize and reward a job well done.

How has Staff Council Addressed?

- 10/07-Staff Council recommended Connie Vail and Pat Zehr as Staff Representatives for the Merit Task Force.
- 11/07 – Merit Task Force began to meet to discuss options for merit pay system. President Wilson would like a presentation of options by the end of the academic year.
- 1/08 –Staff Council asked Connie Vail and Pat Zehr to update Staff Council on their progress at monthly meetings. This will begin at the February 2008 meeting.

Supervisor/Staff Management Training

Comments from Staff

- Non-existent.
- Many people who supervise/manage faculty, staff and students have no training to do so. This continues to be a cause for significant frustration for some. Please, please find some way to help train supervisors and managers for our community. We ought to be able to provide good management for our students (and our staff). As faculty and staff, we deserve to have well trained managers and supervisors and as those who manage/ supervise students, we ought to supervise and manage them in a manner that prepares them for a broader and more competitive community in which to work and live. As we've so often heard, our students pay more than \$35K per year to attend IWU, why shouldn't they expect the best of the best from their experiences here - and why should we not STRIVE to BE the best of the best as well?
- Supervisor Training and a need for better New Employee Orientation Program.
- Supervisor training seems to be something that is not happening on campus. Faculty rotates a chair for their departments with no training as a supervisor and then you start over the next year. Other supervisors have been doing it for years, but seem to have no concept on how to be a supervisor. Isn't there a program that Human Resources has that could help with supervisor training?

How has Staff Council addressed?

- 11/07 – President Wilson shared that Provost Cunningham is working with faculty to develop a new Academic Administrative structure. The specifics of in-house supervisor training for academic department supervisors will be decided after the new structure has been implemented.

Professional Development

Comments from Staff

- Professional Development would include such things as courses at Heartland or ISU, or seminars for developing other business skills. Could a pool of money be set aside for development in which staff members would need to apply for/make a case to receive?
- Funding for continuing education credits and professional development, some of which are required for their jobs.
- When the opportunity for professional development arises I hope there will be an opportunity for supervisor training and that the training would include: effective communication skills, team building ideas, how to tease out the strengths in your staff, especially the skills that would benefit working relationships in both directions.
- I would like to see some opportunities for professional development for support staff. This would include attending seminars, conferences, additional training so we can be better at our jobs. There is very little in house training. One great conference is the Biennial Conference for Women (men are included as well) at the U or I in Champaign. Not all departments want to spend the time and money on support staff who want profession development. Support staff are the foundation to any office and are very much a valuable commodity.
- Provide additional training opportunities for support staff such as conferences, classes, etc for those interested.
- Provide opportunities for training and education. As far as I know, the only current policy is to grant release time for an employee to take one class/semester, here at IWU, if it relates to our work. Very few of us need undergraduate liberal arts courses to enhance our jobs. Many of us could use technical or job-specific training in a variety of fields. On another hand, at a university, academic credentials are essential to advancement. Any sort of support for staff to earn advanced degrees, to provide options for moving into faculty or administrative positions, would be enormously appreciated. Any amount of tuition reimbursement would be wonderful, but even without that, a simple willingness to consider flexibility in work schedules to make study more feasible would improve motivation for staff. (Reward staff in other ways than pay)

How has Staff Council addressed?

- 12/08 – Department funds may be used for professional development of staff. It is a departmental decision.
- Professional Development will continue to be agenda item. We will update staff when there is something substantial to report.

Comments Regarding Specific Departments

Comments are not listed, as they have not yet been shared with departments.

How has Staff Council addressed?

- 12/07 – Procedure was finalized for contacting departments regarding questions/concerns/comments.
- 2/08- SC will discuss more thoroughly, and assign SC members to meet with specific departments.

Tuition Benefit

Comments from Staff

- Not equitable
- Tuition benefits? Is there still movement towards an equitable benefit?
- Equitable tuition benefits
- Staff tuition: Would like to see the administration continue to work toward having dependent tuition benefits equal to the faculty and administrative staff. The administration should start phasing in additional benefits. Start with extending benefits to all Illinois universities. Then work toward benefits at out of state universities. This could be phased in over a set number of years. Is the administration willing to move forward with creating fully equitable tuition benefits for all IWU employees?

How has Staff Council addressed?

- 9/08- Memo to Staff shared current policy with staff:
http://www2.iwu.edu:82/facresources/council/Staff_Memo_9_21_final.pdf

Other Comments:

- 1/08 – Staff Council has not specifically addressed the following issues. The comments will be shared with applicable departments when we begin meeting with departments.

- Begin work on Strategy A of the Strategic Plan Human Resources Goal: Conducting on-going workload analyses: The switch to a 37.5 hr work week; In Staff Forums conducted during development of the current Strategic Plan, every department in attendance expressed a need for additional support staff; The switch to web-site maintenance within each department. While a relatively simple and easily acquired skill, it is NOT a quick-and-easy job.
 - Review workloads and equalize where necessary. Adequate numbers of adequately prepared staff
 - I know of no office or department on campus that feels it is adequately staffed. But even without adding personnel, I feel confident that we could discover inefficiencies in systems, duplication of efforts, and other unimagined ways in which we could relieve stress by improving the support-staff working situation.
 - Hire HR associate to work on staff issues.
 - After an employee accumulates 23 sick days, the next year substitute two personal days for two sick days. People who do not need so many sick days will receive some real benefit.

- A more flexible time-off policy would be an enormous improvement. Why maintain such a strict distinction between sick pay and vacation/personal time? No one is hired to do my work while I'm gone, so there is no difference in expense to the University whether I'm out sick or on vacation. (Reward staff in other ways than pay)
- Ability to hire the best candidate for each position - \$: Provide flexibility (schedules, benefits, etc.); Enhanced recognition and rewards program; Clear performance expectations and job descriptions for both employees and their supervisors – Less 'other duties as assigned'
- There should be salary ranges for non-exempt positions. This would allow hiring managers to better compensate more experienced candidates.
- Classification and Compensation Program**Review of positions takes too long. The process is not adequately explained. Does there have to be change in a position to warrant an upgrade? What if the department feels the position was not correctly "graded" from the beginning? Is this process fair?
- Find ways to reward support staff other than pay.
- Roses given on employment anniversary are a nice gesture. However, many don't appreciate it. How about giving a certificate for free coffee, etc at Starbucks/Hatties instead?