

September 15, 2005

WELCOME

Dr. Pula was welcomed by Sherry Behenna, CSSAC Chair.

INTRO

Dr Pula spoke for about 20 minutes regarding the retention problems at PNC, and gave a brief synopsis of his presentation on the subject. Basically retention rates are way lower than they should be and the campus is losing money. Dr. Pula has been assigned the task of getting this turned around. A consultant was brought in to assess the campus and provide recommendations. Several different plans regarding reorganization are in the works. The students' needs will come first.

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Dr. Pula was provided a list of questions submitted to the CSSAC committee by the clerical and service staff. The questions and summarized answers from Dr. Pula are as follows:

(PLEASE NOTE: Dr. Pula's answers are not written exactly word for word, they are a summary of brief notes taken by CSSAC committee members and could possibly be taken out of context if you did not attend the meeting)

- Q. Why wasn't CSSAC notified of the reorganization of the secretaries since they are the official representatives for the clerical and service staff?
- A. Meetings were setup providing staff (mostly academic services) with information regarding the reorganization process. Kay Toll has a listing of all the committees on campus, and can let us know which ones have openings for CSSAC members.
- Q. Do you foresee any additional clerical reassignments of positions or locations?
- A. Yes, but not immediately, relocations will be made in the future. No one will lose their job!
- Q. Will current/future clerical openings be filled or will positions be consolidated?
- A. Yes, current positions will be filled and some positions will be consolidated depending on what is needed at the time.
- Q. Who determines the amount of clerical staff needed per department and how exactly is it determined? Academic secretaries perform many functions for the department that are not affected/brought on by faculty, but it seems the number of full-time faculty in the department was looked at. I feel part-time faculty actually require more work load for the secretary.
- A. Academic Services decides how many staff are needed. Usually there is one secretary per 12/13 full time faculty. Some departments had too many and others not enough. They tried to even it out.

- Q. Why weren't some of the clerical changes made over the summer when the impact would have been less stressful for everyone concerned?
- A. We can't always anticipate the situation. Some changes come up when they come up and are not necessarily at the best time.
- Q. When someone is transferred to another department here on campus, there is no official announcement or communication with other department who may need to offer assistance to the staff member such as Information Services, custodians, Human Resources, etc. What can be done to help ease the transfer anxiety and the hundreds of calls involved in getting the staff member set up in their new location?
- A. Sue Miller, HR, responded to this question. There is supposed to be a system in place to handle this, but sometimes departments are not notified as quickly as they should be. Sue will check into this.
- Q. Why doesn't the transferred staff member receive some type of official communication other than an email from their former supervisor telling them they've been transferred (such as the new job description, title, and salary range)? Is this the responsibility of the Human Resources Department?
- A. Sue Miller, HR responded. When there is an internal job transfer the staff member will receive a job description and their salary level. She will see that this is handled better in the future.
- Q. Since the department secretaries are now expected to carry an increased work load, will salaries become competitive with similar positions in northwest Indiana and other Purdue University campuses?
- A. Position descriptions have not changed. Some departments have more resource people to use. Salaries at all levels are lower than other Purdue Campuses. Since our campus has not grown much, there is not any extra money for salaries.
- Q. As academic secretaries we are involved in and responsible for almost everything that goes through our departments. In addition to that, we must interact with several other departments on campus and provide information and reports for all of these people. We must also take care of students who come into our offices and call us with their problems. We are the glue that holds our departments together. We function as both administrative assistants and department managers. Most of the secretaries are paid at the bottom of the scale, with the only increase in pay being a percentage increase, at this rate it would take SEVERAL years to even receive the pay we deserve. What is the solution?
- A. Each department has its own dedicated funds for salaries. We must recognize the inequities of our campus.
- Q. With the economy being the way it is, is there any way we can receive a pay increase other than a percentage increase? Merit raises were dispensed this last academic year, why didn't clerical/service receive any?
- A. Evaluations are completed and supervisors are given the information and make the decisions for merit raise recommendations. There is much more overhead than we realize.

- Q. If positions are being eliminated through attrition and reorganization, will the salaries from the eliminated positions be distributed elsewhere?
- A. In some cases, that has been done already.
- Q. You stated in your reorganization presentation to the department secretaries that there will be new academic divisions, but the number of divisions, and which departments they will include, has not been finalized yet. Do you have an approximate time frame for when the decision will be finalized?
- A. We have applied for autonomy, once that is completed then we can go forward with the reorganization plan for a new academic structure. When enrollment grows – more clerical help will be needed.
- Q. You stated there will be new division advisors, will there be division secretaries hired for the deans, or will current department secretaries do the extra work?
- A. No new secretaries will be hired for the deans. Dept. secretaries will become “division secretaries” and will share the work and be there to cover for each other.
- Q. It seems the campus is trying to save costs by cutting clerical/service staff, but at the same time adding more administration. While we are aware of the budgetary problems facing our university, does it make sense to increase the number of upper and middle-level administrators and decrease the number of support people?
- A. Some administrative positions are being eliminated.
- Q. Clerical/service staff should be given a break on parking costs: we make far less than faculty and AP but are expected to pay the same. Please address this.
- A. This questions should be directed to Bill Back or Steve Turner.
- Q. Further schooling for clerical/service greatly benefits the campus; I believe that the cost should be covered 100%. Why aren't we offered more reduction in tuition?
- A. This is part of the benefits package put together by West Lafayette – it is a University Policy and not done through PNC's Academic Affairs.
- Q. For the clerical/service staff to receive proper pay, benefits and respect do they need to be organized (union)?
- A. Our benefits package is very comparable. These matters should be brought to the attention of your immediate supervisors.
- Q. How is downsizing support staff going to increase retention?
- A. We are not trying to downsize, we are reorganizing.

- Q. In the presentation on “One Purdue” the man in the film made it sound like everyone will know how to do everyone’s else’s jobs. He stated that things will be handled by those on the “front lines” and that clients or customers (in our case students) will not be referred to several different offices to have their questions answered. Secretaries are on the “front lines”. It seems like we will all need quite a lot of training to accomplish this. I realize that final decisions have not yet been made regarding exactly how One Purdue will work, but do you foresee our workload significantly increasing once this system is in place?
- A. Lots of training will be needed, but One Purdue will actually make your jobs easier.
- Q. Why is the Vice Chancellor’s office concerned about who is present for the Welcome Back Breakfast? If attendance is mandatory, shouldn’t this be a concern of their immediate supervisor?
- A. No head count is performed.
- Q. Why, when there were so many qualified applicants from the PNC campus, was someone hired from outside for the Administrator Assistant position for Mr. Back? Shouldn’t existing employees be given priority?
- A. Existing employees are not given priority. The person that is best qualified for the position is hired.
- Q. I would like to know why, if for any reason you leave the University in good standing after 20 years of faithful service, and you have applied for many positions that have been posted, that you aren’t even considered for an interview?
- A. Someone like that would not be automatically denied. All qualified applicants are forwarded to the department or committee that is doing the hiring and they choose who to interview. There is no policy against rehiring.
- Q. Is there a “Reorganization Committee”? If yes, why isn’t there a representative from the clerical/service staff on the committee? Why aren’t there representatives from clerical/service on other university committees?
- A. No there is not a “Reorganization Committee”. Kay Toll has a list of all committees on campus and their rosters.
- Q. Since the clerical staff is here 40 hours a week, every week of the year, what can be done to improve the morale of the clerical staff at this time?
- A. Having meetings likes this helps.
- Q. How can the communication between the Vice Chancellor’s office and the clerical staff be improved?
- A. Have ongoing meetings.
- Q. Would you or a representative from your office be willing to attend a CSSAC committee meeting periodically (maybe once a semester) to keep us informed of what is going on?
- A. Yes, that would be a good idea.