Academic Specialist Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, 29 September 2011
443 Administration Building

Meeting Called to Order by Joy Landis 11:05am.

Ex Officio: Terry Curry, Donna Zischke
Other Participants: Carmellia Davis-King, Brett Powell
Absent: Ronald Calhoun, Sandra Eagan-Hill

Motion to accept the agenda by Barbara Kolar, seconded by Kristy Dumont: carried unanimously.

Motion to approve April minutes: The minutes were amended to correct the spelling of the name of Kristy Dumont. Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Robert Brown, seconded by Paul Streng: carried unanimously.

Update by Chair J. Landis:
- ASAC Structure: leadership, committees: Vice chair, Sue Halsey will be responsible for the listserv and this task is advised to stay with future vice chairs. Mary Beth Graebert volunteered to be recorder, and Lucy Maillette offered to record minutes if Mary Beth is unavailable. Joy Landis recommended adding the immediate past chair to the structure. Brown bag sessions for the rest of the year will be organized by Barbara Kolar and Donna Ullrich (we usually have Renee Rivard, or someone from benefits, to discuss flexible spending accounts (fall) and open enrollment (spring); and Dave Byelich to discuss budgets).
- University Distinguished Academic Specialist Award committee appointee: David Lusch, Geography.
- New faculty/specialist panel: Joy Landis represented ASAC on a panel at the fall orientation for incoming academic staff.

Update from T. Curry:
- There is a new Faculty Grievance Officer, Linda Jackson; and there will be a search for a new Ombudsman, to start January 1.
- The Faculty Voice has recommended the evaluation of persons in administrative roles; the Provost volunteered for this process, which began at the end of last semester. The academic governance steering committee will seek broader input.
- Several Deans are scheduled to undergo their five-year evaluations: Engineering, Veterinary Medicine, Music and Graduate School.
- The search committee for the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources is meeting soon to initiate their search.
The Enterprise Business System will be engaging in a “Road Show” to departments to discuss augmentation and improvement of the system.

Notification of salary increases will go out to academic staff at the beginning of October.

ASAC sends a letter each spring to the Provost regarding salary increases; this would be an appropriate opportunity to recommend other items that could be defined as “compensation” (e.g. professional development support).

OLD Business:

- Educational Benefits for MSU Academic Specialists:
  - Sarah Handspike shared handouts, developed by the subcommittee, which outline the educational assistance provided to other job classes at MSU and to positions comparable to MSU’s specialists at the other Big Ten universities. Each of these groups has access to tuition waivers/reimbursements for some level of undergraduate/graduate coursework, unlike MSU specialists.
  - The pilot professional development program, which provided funds for specialists to take classes for three years and the subsequent “real” program were found to have positive impacts. Specialists used 100% of available funds, 90% of which were used for courses at MSU.
  - Terry Curry indicated that the educational benefit for specialists was cut based on the need for university-wide budget reductions, and that specialists have historically been treated like faculty (who don’t have educational benefits). He said that there are two options for next steps: 1) Include a recommendation for educational benefits in the salary increase memo in the spring, and/or 2) Submit a separate request this fall (which will probably be sent to Dave Byelich for a budget analysis).
  - Terry pointed out that other universities in the Big Ten have dealt with their budget restrictions by imposing furlough days on their staff, which MSU has not done. He also receives many requests from faculty who want another degree, but don’t have educational assistance.
  - Kristy Dumont asked whether it would be possible to find out how many specialists don’t have a terminal degree (and would thus be interested in educational benefits). Donna Zishke indicated that she would try to find out.

Motion to convene a subcommittee of ASAC to draft a letter formulating our case for reviewing and revising the educational assistance support for academic specialists, and to bring it back to the group to review in October, before it is sent to the Provost for consideration: Motion by Bob Brown, seconded by Donna Ullrich: carried unanimously.

NEW Business:
- No new business was discussed.
- Barbara Kolar suggested that we choose an election committee: add to agenda for October or November meeting. Joy Landis will review the procedures and advise the committee.
- October meeting: review draft letter regarding educational assistance.

Motion to adjourn by Paul Streng, seconded by Mike Rich: carried unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:00pm

Pack a Lunch Speaker: Lynne Zelenski, MSU Task Force on new health care option being explored.

Attachment: Big Ten Job Cohort Professional Development Comparisons