

5-12-2020

Staff Senate, May 12, 2020

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Recommended Citation

Coastal Carolina University, "Staff Senate, May 12, 2020" (2020). *Staff Senate*. 17.
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Staff Senate

May 12, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Note: The remarks of the senators and others are summarized and not verbatim. The recording of this meeting is available in the Staff Senate Secretary's office.

PRESENT: Sandra Baldrige-Adrian; Shaun Bannon; Dwayne Beam; Carolyn Bender; Jean Bennett; Allison Crandell; Michael Cruise; Amanda Darden; John Dooley; Cecilia Dockery; Lynn Fox; Mark Garrison; Sandra Hatcher; Dawn Hitchcock; Meg Hurt; Judy Johns; Sharon McCants; Ebony McCray; Melanie McKeefery; Ashley Nance; Justin Poindexter; Wendy Singleton; Bryce Skipper; Michele Varga; David Yancey; Travis Youngblood; Bobbi Yurkin

SUBSTITUTIONS: none

ABSENT: none

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Dan Ennis; Dr. David DeCenzo

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Approval of the March minutes were moved by Sandra Baldrige-Adrian, and seconded by Shaun Bannon. **The minutes passed (27 in favor, 0 not in favor, 0 abstain).**

SENATE PRESIDENT REMARKS: We were set to have elections for new senators the 3rd week in May, but with so many employees in different status's we didn't feel that we should hold elections when large numbers of staff were on leave and not expected to participate. Through discussions with Staff Senate and Faculty Senate Parliamentarians we concluded that a declaration of Force Majeure allows us to suspend the normal process giving us time to move through this through the summer and then have elections with the full staff in August. Normally Force Majeure would suspend all official operations, but we have heard from staff that we want to continue the connection and information flow. The senators will continue to have a weekly drop-in via Zoom. This will not be an official meeting but rather a communication vehicle for senators. The drop-in will be held on Wednesdays at 1:00pm. In place of the June and July scheduled meetings we will hold an open forum for all staff. We will continue to gather questions from the staff and forward them on to administration.

PRESIDENT AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

President DeCenzo:

- The Board of Trustees met last Friday and announced that we will open in August with classes on campus. The Board vote to not increase in-state or out-of-state tuition for this coming year. We are hoping the General Assembly, in their meeting today, will pass a continuing resolution that will allow us to take some Human Resources actions. The Board has planned a special business meeting this Friday to go over in detail our pending cuts.

- The types of things we have asked the General Assembly to allow us to do are furloughs and one year of relief from having to fund the pension.
- The emergency management department has been asked to develop a plan of what needs to be in place in order to have students on campus in August. Testing, quarantine abilities, social distancing, class sizes will all have to be determined before we can reopen.

Provost Ennis:

- The Provosts Office is already working on the academic piece of the reopening plan. We are looking at a possible hybrid system and the logistics of how that would work. This is only one of the scenarios we are looking at. I will give the Faculty Senate an update on the academic plan in June.
- We have summer school as total distance learning this semester. There are 1500 students taking Maymester courses and we expect 1500 to 2000 for Summer I and Summer II.

Lori Cox, Human Resources

- Lori was on hand to answer questions submitted.
- *Question 1* – Any further info on layoffs? The voluntary separation came out from HR yesterday. Are they waiting to see who does that to proceed further?
Answer – that has been covered in several town halls, we don't have any further information at this time.
- *Question 2* – At what point can we apply for unemployment? Also, must we use all leave time before we apply for unemployment
Answer – We can't mandate that individuals exhaust their leave prior to applying for unemployment; likewise, we can't prohibit anybody from applying for unemployment. When an employee calls HR we are instructing them that if they are to apply for unemployment, they must be aware they can't receive monies from both entities for the same time frame. Example, you can't apply for unemployment for May 1 to May 15 and then use sick or annual leave for the same time frame.
- *Question 3* – Staff members are reporting that HR is not providing information to employees laid off or put on a non-paid status, especially those in a part-time situation about applying for SC or Covid-19 unemployment. One of the issues is to apply for unemployment, you have to have a good bit of information from CCU including who the contact person is for unemployment verification and this is not provided unless you ask for it. Is there an easier way for this information to be shared?
Answer – Carlos Johnson answered no one has been put on a non-paid status. Some employees have been put into an all-leave status. If they then exhaust leave, then that's a separate matter that can be addressed at that time. Basically, anyone who has questions about leave and/or running out of leave need to contact Lori Cox or Dana Booth. There are some FAQs on the CCU Covid-19 webpage including a link to the unemployment office (SCDEW) and employees should look there for answers about unemployment. The benefits department cannot give advice or instruction on unemployment.

- *Question 4* – By applying for unemployment, do employees put their positions at risk? i.e. by entering leave without pay are they forfeiting their position?
Answer – Dr. DeCenzo answered – a lot of these questions need to be addressed one on one with HR. If the state allows us to use furloughs, then the employees will have an opportunity to apply for unemployment and the SCDEW will be aware that we are furloughing employees.
- *Question 5* – If staff are put on leave, is the employee to return laptops, equipment, and other items they have?
Answer – Carlos had answered this earlier – If the employee is on leave because there is no work for them to perform, equipment and keys do not have to be returned at this time.
- *Question 6* – What is the status of the tuition waiver benefit, both taking classes at CCU and externally?
Answer – Carlos Johnson answered – Executive Council met yesterday and tuition waivers were discussed, a detailed announcement will be released later today. Particular concerns should be emailed to either Kim Sherfese or Carlos Johnson directly.
- *Question 7* – Is a grievance process available to employees who have been put on a leave without pay status? It doesn't seem fair that some employees with 10+ years at CCU are being let go meanwhile others with less than one year get to stay.
Answer – Carlos answered – Decisions are not being made based on seniority right now, but rather critical skills and critical elements of the job are what is being looked at. Normal grievance procedures are in place currently and we cannot discourage nor encourage an employee to pursue this course.
- *Question 8* – When an individual retires from the university what portion of the remaining annual and sick leave are paid out?
Answer – Dana Booth answered in the chat – An employee in a full-time FTE would be paid out 45 days (337.5 hours) of annual leave and there is no payout for sick leave.
- *Question 9* – Is there a deadline or timeframe for when the university will make decisions on who is essential versus placed on an all leave status?
Answer – Dr. DeCenzo answered – We have to wait until the General Assembly makes a decision before we can proceed on our end.
- *Question 10* – Why has there continued to be pay increases for some folks while others are being put in a leave status?
Answer – Dr. DeCenzo answered – During the restructuring that was done last summer, pay increases were give to some employees. Since the virus began, there may have been a situation or two where increases were given but we are not putting out any salary increases now.
- *Question 11* – Regarding the provisos for the state legislature, it has been mentioned that permission to do furloughs is included. Can an explanation be provided to draw a distinction between a furlough, a layoff, and a RIF?
Answer – Carlos Johnson answered – A furlough and a layoff are essentially the same thing for public employees. Both are non-paid. A RIF (Reduction In Force) is a separation from employment. RIF terminates an employee and reduces the entities workforce size. A furlough is temporary for a defined time-period.
- *Question 12* – Can you explain donating leave time to employees who may need it?

Answer – The university’s sick leave and annual leave pools exist for medical situations when an employee exhausts all their leave. There are several criteria that must be met, employees must be in a leave without pay status (projected minimum of 30 days), and medical certifications must be provided. Employees cannot apply simply because they have run out of leave. Sick leave pool covers medical needs of the employee, annual leave pool covers medical needs of a family member.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

In an effort to streamline Staff Senate meetings, but also continue to collect valuable employee feedback data, the Senate will begin referring Topic Suggestions that relate to specific areas of operation to the appropriate person in those areas. The Senate will continue to collect these submissions and will review them in total each semester to determine if there are organizational patterns that should be addressed by the Senate as a whole.

- none

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Student Pay Ad Hoc Committee – no report

Take Your Child to Work Committee – Would like to place this on pause until new senators are sat and new committees are formed.

Policy and Welfare Committee – no report

Membership Committee – no report

Communication Committee – no report

OLD BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS:

- Motion from the Executive Committee, seconded by Dawn Hitchcock
 - Declaration of Force Majeure for 60 days. **Motion passed (25 in favor, 0 not in favor, 2 abstain)**

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- none

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 am