STAFF CONGRESS

MINUTES

October 19, 2005

Members of Staff Congress met on October 19, 2005, in Old Centre. Those attending included: Mark Anderson, Glenda Beaven, Adam Johnson, Patrick Noltemeyer, Donna Phillips, Dotti Rinehart, Johnny Short, and Mona Wyatt.

The group approved the minutes of the September 21st meeting. Everyone agreed that the full meeting of Staff Congress had gone well.

The first item of business was discussion of the unused sick leave reward program (for retirement). Mark reported on programs at some other institutions. The group agreed that we also needed info from the ACS and AICU schools. Adam and Patrick will get together the information (Dotti and Glenda will email them the addresses of the schools). They will have the information organized for discussion at our next meeting.

Glenda shared an article from the Herald Leader with the group that reviewed possible changes in the Flexible Spending Account plan allowed by IRS. She said that at present Centre allows 90 days into a new year to submit reimbursements for the previous year. The new changes may allow an extension of this deadline and a possibility to carry over some unused funds. The IRS has evidently relaxed their former “use it or lose it” policy. Dotti thought this might be beneficial to our employees and would be cost-neutral to the College.

They are going to check with Kay and ask her to pursue it with AFLAC, our provider. It might mean having to renegotiate that contract and at this point we do not know if it only applies to medical. Glenda and Dotti will try to clarify this before the next meeting.

The group then discussed having an Employee Appreciation Day. Ideas included possibly a free meal in Cowan, a small gift, or perhaps a special event. A committee was formed to “brainstorm” and members are: Mona, Johnny, Dotti and Jamey E.

Professional development was the next item of business. The group agreed that we needed to work more on this area and brainstorm about the possibilities. We also need to find out what the College is doing presently overall for staff development. Dotti commented that it seems to vary from department to department.

Some possible topics for on-campus staff seminars were discussed, including: dealing with difficult people, customer service, stress management and time management. Those present agreed to devote time at a meeting in the near future to discussion professional development in more depth and explore new possibilities.

Under new business, Dotti reported on the strategic planning consultants from Stratus that Staff Congress met with recently. At that meeting, we brought up various wage and salary projects and expressed interest in seeing the recent salary survey
results and some hard data. Most staff would like to see regular reports from the College from these surveys, to show the progress that we are making in staff salary adjustments and increases. The consultants thought Staff Congress should have such information.

Staff Congress members told the consultants that we would like to have clarified who we report to (in the bylaws it says “the president”). They suggested that we take issues directly to the president.

The group also told consultants that staff members campus-wide felt a need for more employee appreciation, thought we do have a year-end dinner. We felt that this is probably not adequate. So, Staff Congress said that they will take on an employee appreciation event of some sort.

Some also told consultants that facilities management employees and other hourly and salary employees do not feel integrated into the College as a whole and that these groups do not feel that they are important or an integral part, like faculty.

The consultants commented that this is a problem everywhere. Consultants also commented that staff development opportunities on campus seemed a big weakness.

These were the main items discussed with the consultants and Staff Congress is waiting to see the consultant’s final report.

The group also agreed that we should not call our event Employee Appreciation Day, but instead call it STAFF Appreciation Day, since that is the group we are actually targeting.

Dotti had asked about whether or not Staff Congress had a mission statement, and in reviewing the bylaws, found it in the Preamble. She shared copies with everyone and all agreed that we are not represented on all the committees of the College Council that the bylaws say we should be. Mark commented that he reviewed this matter with Dean Ward immediately after Staff Congress was organized, but that Dean Ward controlled who got on the committees. Dotti discovered that we are not on about half of the committees. Those committees without Staff Congress representation include: Enrollment Management, Student Life, Human Resources, Information Technology, Sexual Harassment, and Planning and Priorities. Adam commented that he is on Planning and Priorities. He said that Planning and Priorities is the main committee that we should have representation on and that he would go and report back to the group.

The purpose of this is for members to report back to Staff Congress so that we know what is going on with these committees. The group agreed that probably Sexual Harassment, Planning & Priorities, and Human Resources would be the most important ones for Staff Congress. Dotti agreed to talk with Dean Ward. Patrick commented that he is on Honors and Prizes. The group will resume discussion of this at the next meeting and Dotti will report on what the Dean says.

Dotti and Glenda asked the group if it felt the need to have a budget and they agreed to go to President Roush and ask for $1,000 to $1,500 so that we will have some kind of budget to pay for the refreshments, events or other projects, especially if we do a Staff Appreciation Day.
The group then scheduled full Staff Congress meetings dates for the rest of the year:

January 25th

April 26th

Patrick then shared information he had found on retractable ID holders. It would basically cost $2.50 to $3 per person. Dotti said she has some budget to do this and would explore the possibility soon. Everyone felt that this would help prevent people losing their IDs.

The next meeting of the Staff Congress will be on November 16 at 3:00 at the Alumni House.

Patrick reminded everyone that the United Way Faculty Favors Auction was November 2nd and Glenda said open enrollment would be November 14-15.