

UI Staff Council Executive Committee

Wednesday, January 5, 2022

2:30 – 4:30 pm

Online via Zoom

Attendance

Present

Kevin Zihlman, James Jorris, Heather Mineart, Becky Keogh, Jackie Kleppe, Rubia Ruiz, Shari Heick, Matsalyn Brown, David Stenersen

Absent

Administrative Liaison

Marla Rosenblum

Guests

- Dr. Liz Tovar, Executive Officer and AVP, Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Bria Marcelo, Diversity Resources Director
- Andre Perry, Director of Arts, Engagement, and Inclusion and Senior Advisor to the Executive Officer
- Michelle Kongable, Senior Employee and Labor Relations Specialist
- Diana Kremzar, Directory Family Services
- Brian Baxter, UISC Arts, Athletics, Student Services, Hospitality Function Representative
- Jackie Curnick, UISC College of Public Health Organization Representative

Approval of UISC Executive committee meeting minutes

Minutes approval:

- December 5, 2021 – UISC Executive Committee Meeting – motion by Heather, second by Matsalyn, approved with no edits

Discussion topics

DEI Discussion and Collaboration

Dr. Liz Tovar, Bria Marcelo, and Andre Perry from the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion shared their general thoughts about DEI at UI and provided feedback on upcoming UISC DEI initiatives.

General Thoughts

- Dr. Tovar is optimistic about DEI work on campus. There is increased energy and focus surrounding DEI from committees, DEI is being included into strategic plans and new positions on campus, and President Wilson has a vision for DEI. This vision includes understanding the importance of DEI to the university, viewing DEI from the broadest perspective, and expanding the definition to include more groups.
- A goal of Dr. Tovar's is to continue to provide more organization for DEI work at UI. This allows the work to be more strategic and committees can better understand their purpose and goals. Examples of this focus include:
 - Formation of a DEI unit leaders' group
 - [Unity Week 2022](#) to highlight DEI on campus

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- Creation of new positions within DDEI focused on strategic communications and arts partnerships
- Other goals and initiatives included in the conversation:
 - Diversifying the people at the table having these conversations
 - Helping people see there are multiple ways to do DEI work
 - Educating and supporting people in their pursuit of having difficult conversations
 - Continuing to talk about Free Speech and DEI work; recognizing these do not need to be positioned against one another
 - Enhancing recruitment and retention efforts
 - Examining policies to ensure equity and accountability
 - Understanding how connection and inclusion are created and can be supported within the arts community at UI
- UI should continue to acknowledge and appreciate those doing DEI work. UISC was recognized for their creation of recent DEI specific awards.
- A focus is on empowering campus leaders to create more welcoming spaces. This work is for everyone, not just those within the Division of DDEI. There is a desire for more training and resources. The unit is looking to increase its training of leaders at the local level to expand its outreach.
- The Division will be launching climate surveys for staff, faculty, and students in March 2022. The survey gives everyone an opportunity to speak to their experience.

Questions from Staff Council

What does the data say regarding recruitment and retention related to an inclusive environment?

When you look at data, specifically student data, campus climate does not rank in the top reasons why individuals leave UI (cost is usually number one). There may be a perception of what UI is and why people leave but that isn't found in the data. UI is impacted by activity within the state and Dr. Tovar is meeting with ISU and UNI about DEI initiatives at the Regent institution level.

Will there be a new DEI Action Plan?

The [two year DEI action plan](#) came to an end in May 2021. There will not be a future DEI Action Plan because these items are being included directly into the UI Strategic Plan.

Do you work with [Dr. Martinez on the healthcare side](#)?

Yes, Dr. Martinez is part of the DEI unit leaders' group. DDEI is also working with the health care side to share experience on structures that have worked on the academic side, such as BUILD trainings.

Feedback on the UISC Demographic Survey and DEI Celebration

DDEI guests offered helpful feedback on the draft of the proposed annual, internal demographic survey and plans for the upcoming DEI celebration.

Parental Leave Discussion

Michelle Kongable and Diana Kremzar shared information on parental leave options.

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- Policies are based on an individual's specific situation and can vary between employees. It's important to connect with trained staff such as your HR representative. Other resources include:
 - [Faculty and Staff Disability Services](#) (Academic) / [Leave & Disability Services](#) (UIHC)
 - [UI Family Services](#)
 - [Parental Leave Webpage](#)
 - https://issuu.com/uilivewell/docs/final_new_mothers_resource_guide (currently being updated)

Policies to Consider

- Pregnancy Discrimination Act – does not provide leave but protects employee
- FMLA (if employee qualifies) – protects individual due to a health condition, such as childbirth, or for a child entering the home; provides protected time off (unpaid)
- [Parental Leave Policy](#) – details how accruals can be used at UI
- Paid Leave Options – sick/family caregiving, vacation, and [catastrophic leave](#)
- Unpaid Leave

Paid Leave Updates

- Kevin shared news about ISU's staff council pursuing a paid parental leave proposal; they are currently seeking feedback from UI and UNI
- A 4-week federal leave proposal was included in the Build Back Better legislation that recently did not pass. It is unknown if this would be included in future versions of the bill.

Questions

Do peer institutions have a set number of hours that go directly to parental leave?

The trend is heading towards this direction. There is also a trend for consistency for family and parent types (6 weeks of paid leave for birth parent, adoptive parent, non-birth parent). There are still many schools like UI who offer generous paid leave accruals to be used for parental leave situations.

The operations manual mentions adoptive parents can use 5 days of sick leave. Is that all they are allowed to use?

Five days of sick time can be used for adoptive parents. After this, employees can use vacation. Adoptive parents can also use FMLA (if employee qualifies) which would act as an umbrella over the sick and vacation time.

Feedback was provided that this information is not easily understood from the resources and could be improved.

Non-birth parents are not mentioned on the website. What options are available for them?

Non-birth parents may also qualify for FMLA. In this case, up to 40 hours of family caregiving could be used then vacation, catastrophic leave, or unpaid leave for the remaining time.

Does vacation have to be completely exhausted while using FMLA or can employees take unpaid leave and save some vacation time?

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Vacation must be exhausted before transitioning to unpaid time.

Why are only 6-8 weeks of sick time allowed under FMLA for birth parents?

This is due to State of Iowa code and definitions. Changes to this would require new legislation.

Feedback was provided to include guidance on types of leave suggested during and after pregnancy loss.

Separate from parental leave, what options are available to staff requesting a mental health day?

Sometimes mental health interferes with an employee's ability to work. It's important for office cultures to support employees and recognize the impact of mental health. Medical documentation would be required if an employee reaches a point where protected leave is necessary.

Have leave policies played a part in staff retention?

The pandemic has had a major impact on parents. Research at the state and national level shows that many parents, mothers in particular, left the workforce due to impacts of the pandemic and this trend is expected to continue.

Executive Committee Handout

SCEC reviewed a document highlighting responsibilities and benefits of serving as an SCEC member. This document will be shared with UISC.

January Staff Council Meeting Agenda

SCEC reviewed the upcoming agenda.

Strategic Planning Updates

No updates.

Adjournment

- James motioned, Matsalyn seconded; motion carried.
- Meeting adjourned at 4:34 pm.

Next meeting: February 2, 2022 2:30-4:30 pm, TBA