



Personnel Committee

January 31, 2024

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 11:08 a.m. by Governor Gaffney in the 1st Floor Atrium at the Innovative Biosciences Center, 6135 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI 48202. Secretary Miller called the roll. A quorum was present.

Committee Members Present: Governors Gaffney, Kelly, Land, Stancato, Faculty Representative Noreen Rossi and Pramod Khosla, Faculty Alternate Representative; and Hassan Ezzeddine, Student Representative

Committee Members Absent: Governors Barnhill and Amal Elsaleh, Student Alternate Representative

Also Present: Governors Atkinson, Busuito and Kumar, President Espy; Acting Provost Clabo, Vice Presidents Ezzeddine, Lindsey, Poterala, Ripple, Schweitzer, Staebler, and Wright; Interim Vice President Gielczyk, Associate Vice President Hafner, Associate Provost Padgett, and Secretary Miller

APPROVAL OF MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 29, 2023

ACTION: Upon motion made by Governor Land and supported by Governor Kelly, the minutes of the September 29, 2023 meeting of the Personnel Committee were approved as submitted. The motion carried.

ANNUAL HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

The committee's first presentation was from Carolyn Hafner, AVP of Human Resources, who focused this year's presentation on highlights of the university's workforce demographics. AVP Hafner shared a number of statistics with the committee. The university's permanent workforce is about 7000, and it also employs about 1600 students and other temporary employees who help fill in gap. The university's workforce is aging, with an average age of 47. About 400 people, or 6% of the workforce, are age 55 and older, and are eligible for retirement. That group includes a wide range of both academic and administrative employees, and makes success planning an important area of need for the institution. Moving to the next layer down, 41% of the workforce falls between age 49 to 54, the next group eligible for retirement. These employees includes executive leaders, managers, academic staff and custodians Succession planning will help prevent major gaps in key roles, and retaining talent in those critical areas. The university continues to replenish its workforce annually, and hiring has remained constant over the

last 4 years. In 2023, the university hired nearly 1400 people, with a slight increase in non-represented academic positions, which include 12-month research faculty, medical residents, graduate assistants and non-instruction part-time faculty. Turning to employees who left the organization, Ms. Hafner advised that there has been a decline in all employment categories. The highest level of turnover was found in the categories of IT professionals, clerical staff, and in police officers. Understanding the reasons for these departures helps the university in its efforts to recruit and retain its workforce. WSU bucks the trends in this area, in that this year's rate of 7% is far below the Higher Education industry average of 16%. Ms. Hafner touched briefly on promotions, reporting that during the pandemic, where a hiring slow down had been in place, a number of vacancies were filled with existing employees, promoting individuals from within the institution. Promotions are still occurring, but are now coupled with other ways to recognize exemplary service, or in areas where individuals have taken on additional responsibilities, and those include salary adjustments, equity adjustments, and bonuses. In 2023, the College and University Professional Association (CUPA) conducted a survey of 4800 employees in colleges and universities across the United States, with questions about challenges employers are facing, and recommendations that universities should be considering to address areas such as recruitment and retention. In terms of turnover, responses identified turnover in key areas such as academic and student affairs, development and external affairs, human resources, IT and facilities. Facilities staff are not able to work remotely, adding a specific limit in benefit options that are available to other employees. Employers also identified males, people of color and individuals between the ages of 21 and 31 as those most at risk for turnover. This differs significantly from the past, where often people stayed for 20 or 30 years or more. Factors impacting decisions to leave included compensation, work-life balance, career development, 100% remote work, and recognition. These are not unique to WSU. To combat this risk, CUPA recommendations include examining areas such as compensation, workload, flexible work arrangements, training and career development, among others. Ms. Hafner advised that the data regarding reasons for turnover was confirmed by the responses given during exit interviews, where the same key areas surfaced, with the top two factors being working conditions and workload schedule.

HR is working a number of initiatives, including one on leadership development and coaching, which will hopefully lead to improving recruitment and retention of top talent. The department also continues to review analytics related to flexible work arrangements, which impacts work-life balance, a key area in turnover and retention. Ms. Hafner reiterated that understanding the data and analytics derived from the exit interview results is a critical factor in moving the university forward in its efforts to be an employer of choice. The floor opened for questions. In response to a question about distraction factors for remote work, Ms. Hafner advised that distraction can occur at the office as well as at home, and that meetings with colleagues have moved from in-office to virtual and video messaging. Some remote employees report working longer hours, but also appreciate the flexibility it provides. In response to a question about mentoring opportunities under this new format, Ms. Hafner discussed a new leadership and development coaching program being implemented that will help to address this issue. Flexible work arrangements are available to everyone except critical infrastructure employees, such as those in facilities, or police officers, whose work must be done on campus. Other employees in the Student

Affairs areas have fewer flexible arrangements, as those individuals provide services that are student facing. Supervisors in those units look for other opportunities to make those environments more positive.

A question was raised on ensuring that those student facing units have staff on hand to support student needs, an important issue for the Student Senate. VP Ezzeddine agreed with the importance of this issue, and outlined the steps they have taken within Student Affairs to ensure that anytime a student walks into service areas in the Welcome Center, they have direct access to staff. They are also trying to encourage students to come into the offices so that they can review issues together, expanding activity on campus.

There are some discussions underway about finding the balance between in person and remote options, taking into consideration student preference and national data about the importance of belonging and campus presence. Provost Clabo reminded the committee of recent discussions advising that students will choose in-person options when what's happening in person engages them deeply, and that this is an issue that everyone in higher education is facing. National data have begun to show a trend towards moving away from online, and a student preference for in-person education.

While the average age and turnover rates at WSU are not unusually high, AVP Hafner advised that HR's focus is on preparing for these transitions, where a gap in knowledge and experience will exist following a retirement or departure, and that is where succession planning and workforce training will help to alleviate these issues. An important aspect of success planning is understanding when retirements will occur and taking steps to address the training and planning needed ahead of the departure.

The timing for knowledge transfer and transition needs to be managed well to minimize the disruption during this period. Workload may also be impacted, even briefly, during these transitions.

These are also times of opportunity to look at vacancies, consider the work being done, whether technology is being utilized effectively, and more broadly utilize workforce planning to consider these issues.

OVERVIEW OF ENTERPRISE HR/PERSONNEL PROCESS & SYSTEMS REVIEW

Next, the committee heard a presentation on a new initiative that is underway on a review of enterprise-wide personnel processes. Interim SVP Bethany Gielczyk took a few minutes to summarize the extensive array of human resource functions that occur across the campus, and introduced Jessica Roy, a representative from Accenture, the consulting firm that has been retained by the university for this HR process review. Ms. Roy provided the committee with background on their firm and the team that will be working with the University on this project. She introduced the Accenture team, all of whom have extensive higher education experience, and then turned to current issues and challenges higher education leaders are facing in higher education, which have some similarities but differ from the corporate world. Organizational reinvention is a term to help frame this process. Employees may be looking for new and different options in career development than have

been offered in the past. Opportunities to help get them engaged and ensure that the way they're working, whether hybrid, remote, or some fully onsite will help maximize the variables in the University. This type of deep dive study is not unique to Wayne State University. In a recent study of higher education leaders undertaken by the consultant, almost all respondents had undertaken some type of HR review, with almost 20% having undergone a significant HR transformation. These reviews help answer questions about benefit structures, skill levels, and processes.

The Accenture team will be working closely with university leadership across the entire campus. It is a full campus initiative, and they are looking for ways to increase efficiencies and enhance HR processes. The project has a 12-week timeframe, which will go very quickly, and meetings with the University leadership team are already underway. Their deep dive will identify HR capabilities that will help find the intersection between people, process and technology. As part of this undertaking, they look at 6 key elements which include defined roles and responsibilities, what, when and how to support these processes, transparent workloads, accountability, and data and technology. In surveying recipients of HR services across organizations, 90% said that if there was a focus on their skills, learning, and development, there would be an improvement in engagement and output. She concluded her presentation by providing a few examples of what type of information and recommendations they will likely be sharing at the end of the 12 week engagement. The recommendations will need to be feasible, respond to the priorities identified, and provide a road map on how to get there. A critical part of this process is community engagement - this is a university-wide change campaign, and the consultants need to understand the true impact of their recommendations. The end goal is to think outside the box about creating a world class HR for the university that makes it a leader in this area.

Governor Gaffney asked whether the HR challenges discussed today are a national issue or unique to Wayne State University. Ms. Roy advised that it is a national phenomenon, but that there are specific issues that are unique to WSU, and there are no cookie-cutter answers. Professor Rossi suggested that the review include an examination of recruitment processes for undergraduate and graduate students, who can also be employees. These are also part of the overall HR responsibilities for the institution, and can impact the knowledge base for the university.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie H. Miller
Secretary to the Board of Governors