

## **Meeting Minutes for May 13, 2020**

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Guest Attendance: Fifteen staff members attending as observers.

### **Introduction /Welcome**

### **Leadership Team Update**

#### **Staff Council Members Furloughed**

- Three SUSC members were affected by furloughs and they will rejoin Staff Council upon their return in August.

#### **Board of Trustees Meeting, April 29**

- Leann attended this meeting, which included a presentation on how virtual learning is going.
- Discussion on impacts of COVID-19 and how the university is looking to the future.

#### **Leadership Team quarterly meeting with President Sundborg and HR VP Michelle Clements**

Discussed the following items:

- SUSC considering an election postponement.
- Made formal request for finalization of our bylaws and approval by June, at latest.
- SUSC budget request was brought up again and we hope to have this solidified by end of the fiscal year.
- Staff Council asked to help with this year's awards and recognition event.
- Received clarification that furloughed employees will be informed 2 weeks ahead of their return from furlough.
- Discussed early release on Fridays through summer and that SUSC supports this benefit.
- Fr. Steve talked about the important role staff will play in the reopening of the university in the fall. If you have concerns or thoughts about things to consider as we reopen, please let Staff Council representatives know.
- Fr. Steve would like Leadership Team back to Cabinet meeting in the next month to present about SUSC progress over the past year and is encouraging of the advisory role of Staff Council.

#### **SUSC President appointed to Reopening Task Force**

- If staff have fears, concerns, positive things to communicate about reopening, they are encouraged to use the anonymous form on the SUSC website.

## **Committee Updates/Reports**

### **Communications Committee**

- Suggest a monthly post-meeting summary in Campus Announcements with hyperlink to SUSC website/meeting minutes. This practice will be incorporated as a trial this month.
- The Committee would like to further discuss and consider anything that might alleviate communication challenges.
- Need to incorporate best practices alongside regular output of communication.
- Spring quarterly email update coming out soon
- May get more site traffic from campus announcements than quarterly emails

### **Recognition and Awards Committee**

- Recognition and Awards Committee will be part of the main university award ceremony planning committee and they will reach out to the Staff Council as necessary for help.

### **Nominations/Elections Committee (action)**

- Committee has been discussing plan to postpone elections.
- Would have been in nominations period right now; due to COVID-19/furloughs, wondered if this was the right time to move forward with elections.
- University leadership supports a postponement of our elections.
- Motion to start nominations on Aug 24, aim to have new council up and running Nov 1
  - Supplemental document includes a transition plan.
  - We will vote on this recommendation by the committee.
- Discussion points include:
  - Timeline- questions about November 1 start for new council. Is this too late?
  - Furloughs- want to give people time to re-enter their work, otherwise timeline would be too short.
  - There will be a smaller staff council this summer due to some SUSC members not being able to extend their terms.
  - Election term would not change and with new timeline, would be just shy of two years.
- Motion to Vote on election postponement and begin new terms on November 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Motion seconded.
  - None opposed.
  - Motion approved by SUSC.
  - University Leadership will communicate this to campus.

## Reminder of Open Meetings

- If you are not on the Council, you are considered an observer unless you make advance request of SUSC President to make comments.
- We responded to a request to include all staff and so meetings were opened up in February; this is the format that was approved by vote.
- We modeled this format after AcA's meeting protocol and are mirroring that in-person process while meeting on Zoom; if you have thoughts/input, please let us know.
- This is another reason it would be ideal to have more outward facing communication from SUSC to regularly remind staff of the ways they can communicate with us.

## Closed Session

### Follow-up Discussion from Special Meeting with Cabinet Members

- A lot of positive feedback from Cabinet re. the special meeting.
- Encouraged Cabinet to reach out to SUSC when they reach out to AcA.
- Conversation around furloughs and encouraging transparency.
- Layoffs are in process and people are hearing about them in a wide variety of ways.
  - Legally, what can be shared?
- Layoffs were communicated about before COVID-19 happened when discussing economic repositioning; pandemic happened, layoffs were already in process.
- Reduction in force policy now on HR policy site states how decisions are made.
  - Per HR policy, 60 days' notice is given when an individual is to be laid-off.
  - Positions will continue through the end of June.
- Position eliminations are different than furloughs.
  - SUSC could reach back out to Cabinet to tell them about the difficulties in how we are receiving communications.
  - University was committed to the timeline requested by Fr. Steve.
  - Divisional leaders were given toolkits with suggestions how to communicate.
  - There may have been certain areas within divisions that were not receiving communications, but HR did give recommendations.
- SUSC may consider a special meeting to discuss layoffs, specifically.

### Committee Updates/Reports Continued

#### Inclusion & Community Committee update/report

- Exploring an informal time for conversation and sharing and would like to try this out once as a trial run.
- Conversation around timing and topic; people being at capacity with Zoom meetings.

- General sense from conversation was that this plan may not fit with primary SUSC purpose and objectives.
- Inclusion and Community was encouraged to consider campus partners and will discuss this further.

## **Re-opening campus discussion**

### **Staff Concerns**

Conversation around campus re-opening and staff concerns. There is a long list of concerns and questions about what the expectations are for faculty, staff, and students.

- SUSC brought up specific concerns that they are hearing about in their respective areas.
- HR is putting a survey out to staff to assess what staff see as needs/concerns.
  - Invitation for SUSC members to participate in survey development.
  - Main Presidential Re-Opening Taskforce is setting higher-level plans and other taskforces are focusing on particular areas of consideration.
- There needs to be ongoing action around this so communicate as much as possible what you are hearing with Leann.
  - If something urgent comes up from task force, we can have a special meeting.
  - Going to start collating information in Teams.
- If we reopen this summer, main burden will be on staff because of faculty contracts- staff would be putting own health at risk.
- HR is putting guidelines in place.
  - These are uncertain as of right now, but this is an important part of the conversation for staff.

## **Equity & Inclusion Discussion Related to COVID-19: Natasha Martin, Vice President & Chief Diversity Officer**

SUSC welcomes Natasha Martin, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion. Much of the conversation centered around the work Prof. Natasha Martin does, how she can be a partner for SUSC, and SUSC comments on re-opening.

- We are grateful to Natasha Martin that she is joining us for this meeting today.
- Natasha Martin wants to partner with SUSC in ways that we would find productive.
  - Wants to learn more about how SUSC is organized.
  - Wants to know more about diversity, equity, and inclusion in context of COVID-19.
  - Wants to hear from us about equity and inclusion from perspective of staff.
- Dimensions of reopening to share.

- Concern for the health of individuals while not requiring people to disclose health/living situations.
- Safety measures
- Could one impact be that Seattle University will have a less diverse campus?
- Starting fall quarter earlier could be difficult financially for some students.
- Frontline staff feeling extremely vulnerable-positionally, physically, etc.
- Concerns about mental health of community members living in isolation.
- Inclusion and Community Committee invited Natasha Martin to partner with them on developing ideas for creating connection.
- Natasha Martin emphasized that she hopes this is the start of a conversation and wants to continue to work with SUSC.

## **Closing**