



VCU

Staff Senate

VCU Staff Senate
2017 Session

S. RES. 1.

March 17, 2017

RESOLUTION

Offering the VCU Staff Senate's comments on the draft policies creating a new VCU Human Resources System.

WHEREAS, the VCU Staff Senate is obligated to represent the VCU Staff and its interests to University leadership;

WHEREAS, the VCU Staff Senate is committed to the full transparency of the HR redesign process at VCU;

WHEREAS, the HR Redesign Committee has opened the draft policies to public comment through March 17, 2017;

WHEREAS, the VCU Staff Senate Shared Governance Committee created a list of comments and questions surrounding the draft policy;

WHEREAS, the VCU Staff Senate Shared Governance Committee was unaware of the comments and questions already submitted to the HR Redesign Committee and recognizes it may have submitted duplicate questions or concerns: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the VCU Staff Senate --

1. Concurs with and endorses the letter, comments, and questions submitted to the Office of the President on March 17, 2017 by the VCU Staff Senate President and the Chair of the Shared Governance Committee, a copy of which can be found as Attachment 1; and
2. Requests the HR Redesign Committee address each question and comment not already addressed by the HR Redesign Committee either through meetings with the VCU Staff Senate or in writing; and
3. Recommends the HR Redesign Committee release the comments it has received during the public comment period to the University community at large.



VCU

Staff Senate

ATTACHMENT 1



VCU

Staff Senate

March 17, 2017

Ms. Susan Carkeek
Assistant to the President
Virginia Commonwealth University

Dear Susan,

After careful review and consideration, the VCU Staff Senate has officially sanctioned the attached set of comments and questions on the proposed HR Redesign policies. While these comments have also been submitted through the portal at the Great Place HR Redesign website, for the purposes of transparency and accountability to the employees we represent, we submit them publicly to you and your department here.

Beyond the specific questions and comments we have collected below, the Staff Senate would like to convey two overarching and frequently expressed concerns we have received. The first is the current lack of a comprehensive side-by-side comparison of how current policy will be changed by the proposed policy. Not only do we believe such a comparison is a critical component to informed decisionmaking, we fear feedback received by the committees and sub-committees may have been ill-informed by this tool's absence.

Secondly, we have received numerous questions surrounding the funding supporting these proposed revisions. These concerns take two primary forms. One is how departments are expected to absorb the cost of the implementation and maintenance that is required with these policy revisions. The second surrounds the seeming incongruity between the lack of funding for these proposed changes, the looming University budget cuts, and the oft-touted pay for performance aspect of the new University and Academic Professionals employee group. We have received multiple questions on how the new employee group can truly expect a responsive pay for performance structure without dedicated funding or even baseline guidance for the expected cost associated for the new policy. It is our hope the HR Redesign Committee addresses both these concerns in the near future.

As the entire VCU community prepares for these significant changes to our relationships with one another, the Staff Senate stands ready to work with the Human Resources Department to ensure the transition is smooth as possible. We will strive to create an environment wherein the new policies are debated with an eye towards collegiality, transparency, a comprehensive understanding of what is proposed, and the underlying rationale of each change.

As many of the below comments arrive in the form of questions, the Staff Senate anticipates working with the HR redesign team to ensure we are able to answer these and any other questions the University community may have. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns regarding these comments. We look forward to working with you as we move forward into this new era.

Kind regards,

Sania Marcoccia
President

Nick Fetzer
Chair, Shared Governance Committee



VCU

Staff Senate

VCU Staff Senate

VCU Staff Senate

VCU Staff Senate comments on the draft VCU Human Resources Policy

General comments/questions

Was there DHRM representation in any of the committees or sub-committees so that members could clarify/verify what was possible in the current structure and what was not?

Has VCU conducted research on how similar changes have impacted other universities? Have they seen an increase in cost? Is there an increase in cost expected for the departments? Will the committee release this research if it has been conducted?

The HR Redesign Committee should consider and plan to address the potential cultural implications of dividing the employee population among the new groups.

Policy Introduction

The official policy document should have specific contact information under the contacts heading. An individual, email address and/or phone number should be provided for policy-specific questions.

Employee Groups

University and Academic Professionals are defined as “Those persons who support the mission of the University in non-faculty roles.” Why is this definition associated with Hourly Employees, and excluded from classified staff?

Hourly Employees: The usage of “part-time and full-time” is confusing. Suggest defining “full-time hourly employment” as 29 hours per week.

Procedures, Section 2: If classified staff elect to become University and Academic Professionals, (UAPs) when precisely do the changes take effect for those individuals?

How far in advance of the enrollment period are the side-by-side comparisons distributed? Are they distributed to each employee who is eligible to enroll?

The fourth bullet point contains an unnecessary “to” just before the word “July.”

Procedures, Section 3: The term “A&P Faculty” is not expressly defined prior to this usage.

What are the “established criteria” that will determine the conversion of A&P Faculty positions? Will those



VCU

Staff Senate

criteria be made public to the University community?

Why are we continuing to hire A&P faculty until July 2018 but stop hiring classified staff in January 2016?

Employment of University and Academic Professionals

Procedures, Section 1: Who determines the need for specialized recruitment efforts to achieve diverse applicant pools?

Procedures, Section 2: Recommend replacing: “representative interview panel is required” with “representative and diverse interview panel is required.”

Procedures, Section 3: Are the parameters around which only one candidate may be interviewed for a position defined?

Procedures, Section 4: Does the pre-offer reference check contain a requirement that any number of references be former supervisors or employers?

Are University employees who accept the opportunity to resign to avoid being terminated for cause during the progressive discipline process eligible for rehire? Are hiring departments able to make this distinction?

Procedures, Section 5: Is the “selection packet” and its contents specifically defined?

How will HR determine approval for moving and relocation allowances for UAPs?

Bullet 4: The number of hours should read 1480.

Procedures, Section 7: Has HR considered a shorter probationary period? Why or why not?

Bullet 5: Suggest revising “remainder of the year” to “remainder of the probationary year.”

Compensation

Has a cost benefit analysis for this policy change been done for VCU? If not, why not? If so, please provide this information.

Job Structure:

Are categorizing jobs into job families within VCU not allowed by DHRM? If so, where is the policy that disallows this?

New Hire Pay:

How is this policy be different than the current policy? We already have a discrepancy in pay for new hires



VCU

Staff Senate

compared to long term employees. How will this policy reduce this compensation issue?

Pay for Performance:

We have been told that it is to benefit the employees, but without a requirement for the funding of the pay for performance are we receiving false hopes of these benefits?

Merit Increases:

During the merit process, although classified staff are not able to receive merit increases, they could still be eligible for in band adjustments for retention, internal alignment, and application of new knowledge/skills, correct? Is merit pay exclusive to the new University Administrative Professionals (UAP) employee type?

Temporary Pay:

Is this a change from current policy? Is temporary pay is allowed for classified employees currently?

Other Salary Incentives:

We currently have the ability to give classified staff up to \$2000 in bonus. Have we used this benefit well in the past? Do you have the data that supports this by pay range, not just classification type? If many departments have not used it in the past, why do we believe it will be used in the new policy?

Performance Management

Will supervisors be REQUIRED to take training in the new performance management system?

What are the metrics with which supervisors/managers will be held accountable to uphold this expectation of development planning and engagement?

Performance management looks like it will take a lot more time and effort on both the supervisor/manager and subordinate. How will this extra work/effort be absorbed in an already lean university community?

Procedures, Section 2: Suggest more specific guidance on ongoing discussion frequency. Perhaps a minimum standard of weekly.

Procedures, Section 3: A more specific definition of school/unit is necessary. At what organizational level should these calibrations occur? Will specific individuals have responsibility for these efforts? Will HR conduct calibration training or issue best practice summaries?

Procedures, Section 4: Are self-evaluations required of each employee?

Procedures, Section 5: It is troubling that VCU expects more employees to receive a rating that is included in the progressive discipline procedures. Consider including a positive "developing" category, and a negative "developing" category to differentiate between those employees who are developing due to increased roles and



VCU

Staff Senate

professional development and those who are categorized as developing due to inadequacies.

Procedures, Section 6: “Written request” should be defined with more specificity. Does an email meet the standard?

In general, the timeline for appealing performance reviews needs more clarity. In paragraph 3, the employee has 10 business days to file a written appeal with the reviewer. 10 business days from what point?

Career Development

What are the differences between two individuals following the same career development path in the proposed employee groups? This policy is not clear.

Is the career development path the same as a voluntary transfer in the current system?

Are career development paths not allowed in the current state system?

Procedures, Section 2: Employees taking classes at VCU and pursuing degrees or certifications should be included as possible job-related career development activities.

The pursuit of outside training, conferences, workshops, seminars, etc., that have associated costs are not available to all employees. How will we ensure that these employees are not penalized and will have the same advancement opportunities across schools/colleges/departments?

Employee Relations

Why would an employee choose this dispute resolution over current policy if given the choice?

Why is there an “allowable and unallowable” grievance list? I have never seen anything like this before. Do other private/public entities subscribe to this? What about the other tier III universities?

What if the grievance is with a senior level administrator or even within HR? Who will oversee this process?

Why is there such a short time period (30 days) from the date a grievance form is delivered? Don't issues that are related to this happen across a longer span of time?

In the unallowable grievance list, what is meant by terminations of restricted positions consistent with the terms of the position? On the same list, what are verbal or written counseling and imposed probations not involving discipline?

Why are issues concerning the fairness or equity of laws, policies, or institutional practices included as an unallowable grievance? Where would these issues be resolved?

Who are the administrators of grievances (level one and two)? What if the grievance is with HR, Integrity and



VCU

Staff Senate

Compliance, or other senior administrators who work for the VP of Administration? It doesn't seem logical to have the final decision maker someone with a vested interest in the department.

Is the grievance policy and progressive discipline policy applicable to all employee groups? If not, which is excluded and why?

Dispute Resolution Procedures, Section 2: Second-to-last bullet point should be revised to read: "Complaints made to harass or otherwise impede the efficient operation of the University."

Procedures, Section 4, Subsection 3. LEVEL THREE: What is the process by which panel members are selected?

Do objections to panel members automatically disqualify selected panelists? Is there a process by which the panel chair will consider objections to panel members? If not, why define one cause-less objection for the employee and manager?

Employee Conduct Procedures, Suspension, Paragraph 1: Define posing substantial risk. To whom? What kind of risk?

Paragraph 4: Is the manager giving notice and an opportunity to respond a requirement?

Alternative Work Arrangements

How will HR handle managers who maintain unofficial restrictions on alternative work arrangements? Will there be any incentives to encourage these arrangements or a process by which managers are evaluated for truly offering these arrangements?

Paid Leave

Procedures, Section 1: Will any special arrangements be made for employees who are currently allowed to carry forward more than 336 hours of annual leave?

Upon what basis are maternity/paternity leave allowances only made every two years?

Procedures, Section 3: Suggest offering a rationale behind requiring the use of 50% of annual leave before offering caregiving leave to those employees who qualify. As written, it is less a benefit and more a failsafe.