

Committee on Priorities and Resources  
Meeting Minutes – November 3, 2020

In attendance: Professor Javier Corrales; Professor Andrew Dole; Professor Jill Miller, chair; Professor Monica Ringer; Library Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper Susan Bradley; Retail Dining Assistant Peter Charron; Director of Financial Planning Thomas Dwyer, *ex officio*; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*; Chief Human Resources Officer Maria-Judith Rodriguez, *ex officio*; Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman, *ex officio*; Allie Ho '24; Sydney Ireland '23; Steven Hegarty, recorder

Not in attendance: Brooke Harrington '22, *ex officio*

The meeting came to order at 8:30 am.

Proceedings

1. Maria-Judith led a conversation about new initiatives in the Office of Human Resources (OHR), including policies the college has implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - a. OHR staff are working remotely, however all services are continuing without interruption.
    - i. During the Spring, Open Enrollment was adapted to the online environment.
    - ii. OHR has established online office hours for drop in questions.
    - iii. Focus on communication and support for remote work, and providing activities for engagement and wellness.
    - iv. Learning and Development staff are offering virtual programs.
    - v. The staff recognition and rewards program continues. In October, there were 99 shout-outs and 36 spot awards.
  - b. The college implemented a hiring freeze in the Spring, and this remains in place. Key positions, however, are being posted. The college has hired additional staff in custodial and dining, as well as student health services. Casuals hired to support the Fall semester student population will end in December, with the possibility of returning for Spring term.
  - c. Due to COVID-19, the college has implemented new policies for staff regarding remote work and flexible schedules, as well as to accommodate the college travel restrictions. There is consideration for continuing with remote work after the pandemic.

It was also noted that continued remote work opens additional opportunities for diversity hires. At the same time, it creates challenges for morale.
  - d. The college is currently offering an unpaid leave of absence program, and an Emergency Leave Bank to help navigate current hardships.
  - e. OHR has created and communicated options for employees who are unable to work for health, family, or other reasons. This includes offering flexible schedules or temporary changes to duties.
  - f. For staff required to be on campus, the college is offering incentive/premium pay.
  - g. OHR completed a Staff Pulse Survey. The results show a confidence in campus safety protocols, however remote work has brought isolation and technology challenges. The college has enhanced the Care.com support options, including backup childcare, and OHR is offering programs to the community for making connections. There are regular wellness programs focused on mental health, and the college employee assistance program (EAP) provider, New Directions, has offerings to address anxiety, depression, and worry.

- h. OHR organized flu shot clinics for staff working both on and off campus.
        - i. Finally, there will be a campus shutdown the week of December 21.
- 2. Maria-Judith reviewed the 2009 Voluntary Retirement program. At that time, 33 of the 58 eligible employees enrolled in the program. However, many employees were hired back as retiree casuals, and some continue to work at the college.

A new plan is needed for 2020, that will include planning with departments on transitions and the transfer of institutional knowledge. Final details have not yet been decided and an announcement date is not set yet.
- 3. A final priority of OHR is to hire a Director of Recruiting and Onboarding, in part to strategize on future hires. The director will also participate in succession planning, promotions, and staff development, among other tasks. The position had been on hold due to the hiring freeze.
- 4. Kevin presented information about the most recent COFHE survey and comparative staffing levels at peer institutions.
  - a. The COFHE survey reports on non-faculty staffing at peer schools, and is conducted every three to four years. The most recent survey was completed in 2017, and the next one will occur in 2021. Results will be available late in Spring semester or over the summer.
  - b. Participating schools submit staffing and support FTE levels by specific function and can compare staffing levels to other schools.
  - c. Between the 2014 and the 2017 survey, hiring brought Amherst staffing in line with peer schools. The hiring that occurred was informed by campus priorities:
    - i. Student safety and well-being;
    - ii. Academic support;
    - iii. Student experience;
    - iv. Diversity and inclusion;
    - v. Advancement (in support of a comprehensive campaign); and
    - vi. Professionalization and compliance.
  - d. Questions and continued discussion of the survey will be addressed at a future CPR meeting.

Adjourned 9:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
S Hegarty