

Committee on Priorities and Resources
Meeting Minutes – November 9, 2021

In attendance: Professor Nusrat Chowdhury; Professor Andrew Dole, chair; Professor Jill Miller; Professor Monica Ringer; Interim Director of Human Resources Chris Casey, *ex officio*; Retail Dining Supervisor Peter Charron; Interim Chief Financial Officer Thomas Dwyer, *ex officio*; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*; Interim Director of Financial Planning, Ashley Travis, *ex officio*; Assistant Director of Family Giving, Emily Ziomek; Allie Ho '24; Jaden Richards '25; Steven Hegarty, recorder

Not in attendance: Jae Yun Ham '22, *ex officio*

Guest: Lisa Rutherford, Chief Policy Officer and General Counsel

The meeting came to order at 8:00 am.

Proceedings

1. Lisa presented an overview of nation trends amid the “great resignation”:
 - a. Bureau of Labor statistics from August 2021: 6.3M employees were hired, but on 8/31 there were still 10.5M job openings, and the unemployed totaled 8.4M. Separations totaled 6M. Of this number, 1.3M were laid off, furloughed, or discharged: 390k retired/passed; and the quit rate was 4.2M. The last group left voluntarily, led by food service and retail workers.
 - b. A high quit rate historically means a good job market but, instead of quitting to take new jobs, many are staying out of the market now, either for extended time or permanently. Factors are wanting flexibility, taking early retirement, losing of child care options, fear of COVID, and a high burnout rate from working during pandemic, notably among front line workers. This has contributed to the current labor shortage.
 - c. The more generous unemployment benefits did not cause a gap in employment on a large scale, though it may have been a factor with individuals.
2. Chris continued with the current status at Amherst:
 - a. We are currently at an all-time high of open positions, around 60.
 - b. The college has trouble attracting candidates and hiring employees in operations and dining services. AC is offering incentives, including a return to work bonus for academic year casual employees in addition to a retention bonus for exempt and non exempt positions. The retention bonus will be paid in two installments, one at the end of September and the other at the end of December. HR has also offered a referral bonus for select positions.
 - c. There was a larger annual salary increase in July 2021, 3.5%, plus structural increases for lower paid employees. Those raises were the equivalent of between 5 and 7%.
 - d. AC has increased the minimum casual hourly rate to \$15/hour and is working with consultants on a larger salary and wage review.

- e. The remote work pilot program is underway. This provides a flexible work arrangement for managers and employees.
 - f. To help with recruiting, the college is advertising positions through 50 outlets, and is looking for more. HR is also offering remote job fairs.
3. CPR questions and discussion:
- a. Dining is the biggest area of concern currently, and HR is monitoring other needs. Tom and Catherine reported similar issues at peer institutions.
 - b. For recruiting, salaries offered are too low, and we are losing top candidates. There are issues around recruiting a more diverse staff, and the remote pilot is having an impact on the character of campus.
Chris is working with consultants to offer appropriate salaries to candidates and to highlight the benefits available at AC.
 - c. There is work not getting done due to staffing shortages. Is there a need to adjust expectations? For example, not offering late night dining due to employee shortages.
 - d. Noting that staff hiring has outpaced faculty growth, more college staff are needed to support the faculty and students.
4. The remote work pilot is underway. Around 350 staff are in the pilot, across all divisions. Most are hybrid, and splitting days remote and in person. The pilot runs through AY2021-22.
If the program is continued, the college may create entirely remote positions, noting that at the current time employees must reside in Massachusetts for remote work. (The college is looking into out of state possibilities.)
At this time, every hybrid employee has an assigned workspace on campus. A “hoteling” model is under consideration. This would provide empty offices for a day or other short-term use.
5. Jyl Genzler reached out to members of CPR in response to the announced changes at the Writing Center. There have been no cuts at the Writing Center, however, they are not able to offer the same full range of tutorials as before and are streamlining their offerings.
In the absence of any cuts, CPR will not weigh in. The letter is being discussed in Committee of Six, and Committee on Educational Policy. Andrew will write to Jyl with the above decision, and offer to reconnect after the other committees meet. If it returns to CPR, more details on the changes will be distributed.

Adjourned 9:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,
S Hegarty