



Women's Advisory Committee for Finance and Operations

WACFO is a Voice Of and For the MSU Community and a Conduit for Response in an Ever Changing Work Environment.

Collaboration of the committee members who draw from the women of our campus continues to be at the forefront of our work in moving the campus forward at a steady pace. Progress comes through listening, acting, and responding to needs as well as proactively taking initiative to create change. The year proved to be more challenging than anticipated due to the financial climate which has tested most every corner of our University in meeting needs with less funding and a smaller number of staff.

Starting with a base committee group with empty seats to be filled, the charge of filling open positions was moved from an ad hoc role to an assigned responsibility of the Vice Chair. As the year progressed, WACFO saw its numbers decrease at first when members were repositioned within the University or individuals sought new opportunities off campus. The Vice Chair's position was among those which was vacated leaving an important role unattended. Once filled, the new Vice Chair forged forward in seeking out new members for WACFO committing to re-balancing membership with the diversity of our workforce. Smaller sub-committees meant leaner goal setting and attainment and progress was made at a more deliberate pace. In the words of Vice President Fred Poston, "It's a time of evolution, not revolution."

The Coming Year 2010 – 2011

The Committee began its year of service in August 2010 with a planning retreat and the welcoming of two new appointees. Goals for the coming year included:

- Re-Discover the Meaning of WACFO and its importance to the MSU Community.
 - The effects of the economy on the work environment and the change in work load demands on all staff at all levels have caused adjustments in every department. As shifts occur, the issues change. These changing issues need to be discovered with discussion and recommendation to the Vice President's Office.
- Re-Formulate the Set-Up of the Standing Committees by the addition of the Membership Committee as a Standing Committee rather than an ad hoc committee
 - revision of Bylaws
 - renaming of Chairs for the Committees / Opportunities to Serve in a new capacity
- Re-Connect with the Women of MSU outside of the Forum in March

One of the topics presented to us was an evaluation of the MENTORS (Mentoring Enhances Networking, Teaching, Organizational Renewal, and Success) program. Specifically, what has been the outgrowth of this program and whether it has benefited employees, especially women? With the help of staff from the Human Resource Development (HRD) office our investigation offered many findings. First, we found that the MENTORS program has been well received and that in general participants have found the program to be very beneficial and its continuation has value. Secondly, we found that approximately 150 participants have graduated from the MENTORS program and the majority of them have been women.

At this time we also began considering how Educational Assistance benefits were being used. After HRD shared previous years' survey results from 2007, 2008, and 2010 we decided that another survey was not needed at this time. Instead we thoroughly analyzed the results of those previous surveys and drew some interesting conclusions.

- We found that certain MSU employee groups feel that they are unable to use their Educational Assistance benefits. Employees cited lack of supervisor support and inconvenient class times and locations.
- The committee met with Dawn Hecker, Human Resources Assistant Vice President, about these issues. Dawn agreed to investigate the possibility of bringing some HRD classes directly to some units on campus, such as RHS. Possible venues might include classrooms that are in the dorms or neighborhoods.
- We also suggested offering some of the more popular classes during the evening to attract second and third shift employees. Dawn was also interested in offering classes at some off campus sites, such as the medical centers in Grand Rapids and Detroit.

As a committee we would really like to have Dr. Poston's support for these initiatives. At the encouragement of Kathy Lindahl we have drafted a letter that we are proposing to be sent from Dr. Poston to all MSU employees.

Finally, the surveys indicated a real need for support staff career counseling. Currently HRD does some career type coaching in a small, informal capacity; however many people do not seem to be aware of this service. We recommend that staff from HRD, or another Human Resource office if it is more fitting, obtains certification to provide career counseling and to advertise these services. Career counseling would assist new staff, as well as seasoned staff, looking for advancement opportunities or just new challenges within the university. Career counseling would guide employees as they decide what education, training, or mentoring might assist them in reaching their goals. This type of service would benefit both the employee as well as the university.

I would like to thank the committee for their hard work over this past year. If implemented, these suggestions will truly be beneficial for both the employees of MSU and the university as a whole.

Membership Committee

Cheryl Luick, Chair

Members: Barb Heyser, Joyce Brennan, Lisa Galbavi

We began the year by meeting with Ellen Maher as our Vice Chair WACFO and Chair for Membership. A few short meetings were completed and we created some memos and started changes for the Web page. Ellen was overwhelmed with EBS and stepped down. Cheryl Luick was then made Vice Chair of WACFO and given the membership duties.

- Membership Committee should be moved from ad-hoc to standing committee status. A revision in by-laws should be made to set this decision as a new permanent and standing committee.

In addition, we attended two events, one with Housing and Food Services and the other for MSU Women's health. A flyer was created and pens ordered for handing out to everyone we talked to so they would know what WACFO is about. We also gave those with interest an application to join our group and from these two events we acquired four new members: Barb Butyter, Wendy Baker, Michelle Knight and Nilda Rodea. Because of this success we will continue to attend these recruiting events.

The forum also provided us with a list of Labor employees that expressed an interest in WACFO. Those employees will be follow-up with during 2011-2012. Future goals include a wider diversity of committee members and to enhance the decision making process of the committee.

Our concentration for the next year will be in the labor groups as we are currently short three members in this area.

Training and Development

Megan Hirschman, Chair

Members: Bethany Phillips, Margie Aimery, Lisa Galbavi

This subcommittee did not provide a report.

Benefits/Work Climate/Health & Safety

Joyce Brennan, Chair

Members: Sharon Potter, Cheryl Luick

(Luick was moved to Membership Ad Hoc Subcommittee in February, 2010)

The Benefits/Work Climate/Health and Safety Subcommittee met by telephone conference call or in person to find issues affecting faculty, staff and students on campus.

Looking for safety hazards in and around campus buildings was our first focus. Each WACFO committee member was given a form to fill out as a guide for checking their areas. Immediate hazards were to be called in to the Physical Plant and then reported to WACFO. Lights flickering and out were corrected within a day of being reported.

Homeland Security was on campus going through the buildings with the MSU Fire Marshall looking for our vulnerability. The MSU Fire Marshall confirmed that there are no “exempt from fire safety” buildings but some may be grandfathered from some current laws. Each building is being upgraded as money allows.

One of the issues this subcommittee brought to WACFO was that restrooms did not have hands-free toilets and faucets. Since that time, 25 new auto-flusher toilets and 25 new touch-less faucets have been installed in the main floor restrooms of Case, Wilson, Holden and Wilson Halls. This is being implemented throughout the residential buildings. It is our understanding that this will be implemented whenever there is an upgrade to any buildings on campus.

A “card access” system is being installed in Residence Halls; although not foolproof, it is helping restrict access to the living areas of the halls. It also has cut down on the number of flyers being left in the residential wings.

The “south neighborhood” is under construction with the renovation of Case and Holden Cafes and the razing of Cherry Lane buildings. All areas seem to be properly fenced in and well marked. South Case does have some concrete leveling issues near the entrance to be addressed during construction.

A new bike pad is being added to Wonders (south east) for all the bikes parked there exceeding the capacity of the current small rack at the site. We had reports of broken sidewalks around Life Sciences and foot paths created around Fee, Hubbard, Akers and Conrad, versus using the sidewalks. When a report of a wide pothole in the parking lot (#8) by the Student Services Building was called in, it was filled in the same day, as were other small holes in the lot. Many of the sidewalk issues will be cleared as construction is finished by the respective buildings.

Any changes in our benefits were brought to the WACFO meeting by Tom Block or Bethany Balks. And our questions were answered either at the meeting or in a timely manner. Our subcommittee asked for toiletries to share with displaced women for the MSU Sexual Assault Program and WACFO committee members donated over 20 items.

Brennan and other WACFO members met with Dr. Banks and Pat Lowrie regarding a Work-Life office. It was an informational meeting regarding a clearinghouse for faculty/staff/contact point for new hires. Eventually the office would see if we have duplicates on campus.

Thank you to all the WACFO committee members that kept their eyes and ears open for issues impacting the benefits, work climate, and/or health and safety issues of faculty, staff and students.

Conclusion and Comments

A Unique Insight and Opportunity

It was realized with the influx of several members at the same time this past year that a similar issue to replace those members simultaneously would occur in the future. A graduating class was also cause for concern regarding the continuity of sub-committee work. Much discussion was held and with the support and approval of Kathy Lindahl, a unique and one time service extension was approved by Dr. Poston to the graduating class of WACFO. (A copy of the proposal is included after this summary.)

There were three main aspects of this guideline with notes and follow-up:

1. Each member could choose to remain for an additional year of service.
 - a. From Dr. Poston: Required that each person declare their intentions for service extension in order to not allow a rolling re-visit of the issue in subsequent years. After acceptance or non-acceptance of the extension, no revisions were to be allowed.
 - b. Result: Three members of the chose to remain for an additional year.
2. Allow the outgoing Chair to remain on the committee (in either an executive or non-executive position) for an additional year for the purpose of membership enhancement and recruitment.
 - a. From Dr. Poston: A non-chair position is preferred.
 - b. Result: A non-leadership role was chosen on the Membership Committee.
3. Some incoming new members to WACFO were assigned to fulfill partially completed terms by outgoing members.
 - a. New members joining the committee were made fully aware of their service year length which may be less than the two, two-year term maximum.

Dr. Poston signed off on the extension agreement since it fell outside WACFO ByLaws. This will even out the potential turnover issues through 2015 and this foresight was keenly appreciated.

In Review

Kathy Lindahl has been a steady and continued support for this committee and for the women of Michigan State University. Her presentation of 'Kathy' Career Tips' at the closing retreat meeting in June 2011 was insightful, humorous, and meaningful. Her guidance of this committee through this past year has been greatly appreciated even more so with the challenges of the economy on issues within the committee and throughout the campus community.

As a whole, the year saw incremental forward progress in steering towards goals. Plans outlined at the beginning of the year changed direction or were reconsidered as members discontinued their service due to campus adjustments, personal concerns, or departmental downsizing. It was observed that the campus work climate seemed uneasy and through feedback and discussion with women all over campus including those who could no longer serve with WACFO, it was discovered that many were concerned about the balance of work responsibilities with volunteerism which was not directly work related. Formal support from Dr. Poston's Office was provided to all current and potentially new member's

supervisors regarding each member's ability to be excused from daily duties in order to attend and serve with WACFO. This reaffirmation of our purpose was a welcoming support for all.

WACFO survived the climate shift of the challenging year. As much as forward progress was kept mostly in check, sometimes in the face of massive change, holding course without losing ground is a sign of success.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Kegler

WACFO Chair 2010-2011

May 3, 2011

Dr. Fred Poston
Vice President for Finance and Operations
412 Administration Building
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824-1046

To Dr. Poston,

The Women's Advisory Committee for Finance and Operations has a unique role in being the eyes and the ears for a portion of the campus community. Like many groups and the University as a whole, the economic times have been challenging. Some members of our committee have seen their positions eliminated and those in some labor groups have resigned due to work loads.

Even though our committee has seventeen positions available, it currently has shrunk to ten members. In the past, Membership was an ad hoc committee which was called into action for just a portion of the academic year when interviews were held to select new members. With the shrinkage of the committee, last fall it became an assigned task to the Vice Chair. Membership would now be an ongoing process to rebuild the size and diversity of the committee. However, our Vice Chair resigned under the pressures of her office workload after several absences. The new Vice Chair is moving forward with the task.

In the meantime, we have a unique situation. With the potential addition of as many as eight members occurring in the same year, when looking forward we possibly recreate the same mass exodus in the road ahead. WACFO is already concerned with continuity on our current subcommittees and the continued growing of leadership. Rather than hit the bump in the road a second time, I have proposed three options to the current membership. Each of these falls outside the current bylaws and would need your consideration and approval for a one time variance.

1. Extend all current WACFO terms of service by one year. This will allow the rebuilding of the committee at a pace which will allow proper time to seek, screen, interview, and welcome viable and talented women to the table.
2. Allow the outgoing Chair to remain on the committee (in either an executive or non-executive position) for an additional year for the purpose of membership enhancement and recruitment.
3. Assign approximately half of the incoming new members a different term limit in order to avoid the recurrence of a large turnover issue four years from now. Some would be assigned a single three-year term rather than the two, two-year maximum now in place.

As our campus community settles in to new roles and changing responsibilities, it is important that it continues to evolve and move forward. With the proposed changes listed above, WACFO feels that it can also evolve and meet the changing needs of the MSU workforce on a time table that is responsible and feasible in a transformed climate.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Hegler

WACFO Chair 2010-2011