

**Syracuse University Senate Committee on Services to Faculty and Staff  
2014-2015 Annual Report**

Presented to the Syracuse University Senate December 2, 2015

*There shall be a **Committee on Services to the Faculty and Staff**. The Committee shall strive to secure for faculty and staff members those services which will contribute to their welfare or convenience, including orientation to the University, housing, payroll deductions, insurance, health services, and they shall communicate annually with the Chancellor regarding policies governing faculty and staff perquisites and the structure of salaries. [University Senate Bylaws, Article V, Section 8]*

After 12 years of dormancy, the Senate voted in February 2014 to reconstitute the Committee on Services to Faculty and Staff. Its last report is dated December 2002. As recorded in the minutes, Senators raised questions and shared experiences about issues including:

-a need for more adequate and affordable child care for faculty, staff and graduate students;

-uneven implementation of the maternity/parenthood leave policy and procedure across campus;

-issues and concerns of faculty, staff, and students who were primary caregivers (of partners and elderly parents, as well as children), including the need to broaden the University's definition of "family".

The Senate voted to refer these matters to a *newly revived* Committee on Services to Faculty and Staff to “make recommendations regarding family-friendly and work life balance concerns, and report to the Senate during the 2014-15 academic year.”

What services or areas we’ve explored

We have met every month (often twice) since fall 2014. Our charge led us to explore particular areas related to the SU community and Human Resources. We also discovered we were talking about some of the same things currently explored in Fast Forward. Discussing aspects of services to our community has led to larger issues and further questions.

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We began wanting data about our community:

*Who are staff and faculty? (a bird's eye view: Number? Gender? percentage of those with pre-schoolers? or who are care givers? or who request maternity/parenthood leave? etc. )* However, when we compared data from both HR and OIRA, we found discrepancies. Where is accurate data? How does the community access it?

*What services do staff and faculty now use and what do they need? Is this data collected? By whom? How can it be accessed?*

*Are there recent campus surveys that can be useful? Will the Spring 2016 campus-wide Climate Assessment survey of the learning, living, and working environment cover related areas? (SU News, October 22, 2015)`* How does that investigation relate to services to staff and faculty even if not to our committee? How will that material be available?

*Where are services presented and how well? How are materials for the faculty handbook or staff handbook updated or changed? Who has responsibility for keeping them accurate and clear*

*What's the Senate's role in evolving services? When does the Senate discuss and vote on services or policy changes? Which Senate committees are consulted re particular services, such as Administrative Operations and parking? When does the Senate vote on issues, such as promotion or professors of practice?*

That led us to investigate areas of concern about work/life balance affecting various SU constituencies:

*Family caregiver concerns.* We learned about two relevant task forces but have not seen reports of their actions. What was the scope of and recommendations from the task forces on Dependent Care and Child Care? Our research into *family* showed that SU policies included material related to spouse or domestic partner; child (birth, adopted, step, foster); and parent. Do any staff and faculty have difficulties with those parameters?

*Search for Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)* The Chancellor appointed a Search Committee in 2014 chaired by Dr. Michael Haynie to fill the vacancy as head of HR. Our committee met with him and were candid about our concerns in this important arena. We offered our support for filling this position quickly. He emphasized the importance of this search and detailed the process involved. In

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mid-March, SU News (March 16, 2015) announced that Andy Gordon would be the CHRO as of April 15, 2015..

*Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP)* After rumors of budget difficulties and layoffs had been circulating, some staff members received individual letters on July 1, 2015, that required a response by August 5. Background deliberation involved HR's town hall meetings and discussions within units, with colleagues outside the unit, and with families.

Our committee was concerned that the community had not heard a progress report by late September. We asked the Agenda Committee for an interim report to be shared with the Senate. See Appendix 1. "In the Chancellor's October Senate report (described in the minutes), he said VSIP "had been a success enabling the University to identify areas of improvement and efficiency, and align SU with its peer institutions, without layoffs." We are still interested in further information asked about in our letter because this initiative affects not only those who are leaving but also those staff who remain.

*Staff complaint process.* We believe it important to have a clearly articulated grievance policy. What is the purview of the Staff Complaint Coordinator noted on-line? How can the materials be laid out more efficiently so that one can move from the policy to the relevant forms, etc.? A request was sent to HR in January and in May requesting a report, as established in the policy statement, [http://supolicies.syr.edu/univ\\_senate/staff\\_complaint.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/univ_senate/staff_complaint.htm). We received no reply to either request.

*Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)* This program has offered confidential counseling to our community for many years. When we learned that its office was to be closed, we were concerned with what would replace its services. The Wellness Initiative, announced on November 19, 2015, said SU will "partner with an outside provider to enhance and expand FSAP."

This committee has not been involved in the evaluation of FSAP nor in the current review of proposals from outside providers. We do have questions about the range of services and how they will be provided. `

*Interests in common with the Committee on Women's Concerns.* One of our members is a liaison with this committee on their proposal for an ombudsman. We invited their chair to describe the benefits, costs, and arrangements to clarify this idea as well as their contacting such offices at other universities. We think the concept has merit and needs further discussion.

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*Work/life questions needing subsequent investigation and communication.* We still want to look at several areas such as flex-time arrangements, staff development initiatives, recognition of service, fair assessments, performance reviews, etc. For example, what about *green days*? In the days between Christmas and New Year's, will we continue closing offices to save energy? Staff surely appreciated the days off in past years. Will the policy be changed?

After our first year as a revived committee, we are convinced that this is an important area because services to faculty and staff touch us all. However, as a committee we have limited effectiveness. We can ask questions or request clarification. However, we don't believe the current organization is sufficient to address the needs, especially of the staff. Is there a better conduit to address staff concerns?

We should at least establish a channel of communication with HR, perhaps a formal relationship with some HR personnel as liaison with our Senate committee. We know that the handbook materials on-line, for example, need updating.

We are not alone in being challenged by the concerns affecting work/life balance. However, we need active collaboration to make the services to staff and faculty more transparent, responsive, valuable, and effective.

Members of the Services to Faculty and Staff (Bron Adam, Suzanne Bartlett, Gail Bulman, Harold Burstyn, Kimberly Cook, Sharon Hollenback (Chair), Patti Ford, Matthew Mulvaney, Bonnie Ryan, Cora True-Frost -on leave, Susan Wadley, Vicki Wang)

## Appendix 1

RE: Requesting a report at the October Senate meeting about this summer's VSIP initiative  
9/23/15

The SU community deserves a report about this summer's VSIP initiative. The actions had substantial impact on many of us, especially because they followed several months of uneasiness and activity re possible cuts in many units on campus.

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We members of the Services to Faculty and Staff Committee believe it imperative that the SU community get a detailed report on the university-wide VSIP effort. A fuller report should be shared soon so we have transparency and a substantiated understanding of what has been happening. However, for the October meeting, someone in the administration needs to be forthcoming with all of us.

We are worried because we find morale low and uneasiness high among staff in particular. We feel strongly that SU needs a progress report of what was accomplished with VSIP and what are the next steps.

We believe the reports (an overview in October followed quickly by a more thorough one) need to address:

- Aggregate data re: number eligible, fraction who opted in, estimated costs and benefits or savings.
- Our loss of individuals with much institutional memory is a major blow. What is the plan for preserving that knowledge?
- What is the plan for hiring any vacated positions? What gaps in core functions exist if certain positions are not replaced?
- What is being done about the shifting workload of those left? What about their changed job descriptions? What is the plan for their getting support for training replacements? How does this affect performance reviews?
- What is the process for making *the last day* decisions and who is in charge? How is that confirmed with the persons leaving and their supervisors? What should people do who have not yet heard back?

We are concerned that the SU community does not have information about this major initiative, no progress report on VSIP. Will you please correct that failing beginning with a report at the next Senate meeting?"