

## Staff Senate General Meeting December 07, 2016

Speakers: Shernita Parker, Director of Organization Development

President Angel Cabrera

Shernita Parker, Director of Organization Development (Training) in HR came to talk about the changes to her department and bullying in the workplace

- Her group is going to be focusing more on coaching, leadership, and positive work environments
- They are going to begin building their courses around these ideas and revamping existing courses to do the same
- They want to address “toxicity,” and how when an issue goes unnoticed or unaddressed, it can spread, get worse. and affect more people
- She asked what we thought was needed in HR training courses & programs or issues we’ve noticed
  - Issue: We go to these events like Faculty/Staff Enrichment Day, and it all sounds very good (enrichment day focused on positivity), but people don’t see that reflected in their own departments.
    - Response: They are looking for ways to bring those types of things (talks, exercises, etc.) to other places like addressing a whole department or directors’ meetings
  - Suggestion: Gratitude Certificate Program
    - Response: They do plan to start working in gratitude and appreciation into some of the courses and programs. They may eventually look at creating a separate program for it.
  - Question: Someone had received advice to take the “dealing with difficult customers” course because it was very good, but it’s not currently on the HR training calendar.
    - Response: They are revamping a lot of courses, so they haven’t had too many available recently. All the new courses and a fuller calendar will be available beginning in January.
  - Feedback: A senator has completed the experienced supervisor series, which includes a cohort you work with over the course of a year. She found that really useful and helpful later on because you build a network of other supervisors.
    - Response: They’ve heard a lot that people really like the cohort, so they’re looking into building on that or introducing that into other programs.
- Bullying in the Workplace:
  - Question: How do you provide the bullied with a safe space? How do you encourage the bully to change their behavior?
    - Response: Problem solving need to be included in the safe space. It can’t just be a place to complain. It starts with the safe place, and perhaps an ally, so the bullied can regain some of the power they feel like they’ve lost. The ally can also help the bullied; perhaps by going with them to the people or resources where they can get help.
    - They want to make coaching available to everyone, not just supervisors, which could be used to address some bullying issues. The bully must be made aware of the bullying, as they often aren’t aware. Specificity is really important when talking to a bully.
  - Question: If the bullying is coming from leadership, is mediation the best place to go?
    - Response: Yes, mediation is the best place for those cases.

- Question: Why is it that often suggestions are given to the bullied on what they can do differently, rather than addressing the bully?
  - Response: Suggestions on things to change or do differently are often given to the bullied because when people are bullied, they often feel powerless. Giving them things *they* can do allow them to take back some power.
- Question: What if a supervisor or “super-star” employee is the bully?
  - Response: Their supervisor or leadership must get involved. There must be consequences for bullying behavior, and they must be enforced.

President Angel Cabrera:

- Stats and general information:
  - Enrollment is up this year (new record high: 35,000)
    - Out of state enrollment has increased
  - We’re doing better financially: not accumulating more debt
  - Tension about resources
    - We were created as a regional school, and our financial landscape hasn’t changed much since then
      - Less money from state, lower tuition, less donations
      - Currently trying to close that gap between what Mason was established as and what it’s become
      - State support is not likely to improve, though our voice is being heard much more at the state level now
    - Although it sounds cold and corporate, we have to look at every new program and initiative in terms of money and support
      - Will it generate revenue, support itself, etc?
  - Employees ARE a top priority – it is *always* a topic with elected officials and the state
  - So far, we haven’t received any negative feedback from the state about the “unsanctioned” raises
- Question: Where do classified staff raises fall in priority during budget planning?
  - Response: It is constantly talked about with the state; Mason leadership is constantly bringing up the pay discrepancy due to cost of living
- Tangent: Cost of living discrepancy
  - Mason takes part in a peer group of universities around the country that are similar to us in size, programs, location, etc. Our salaries are *always* lower other universities in that peer group.
- Question: What leverage do we have in Richmond?
  - Response: We have our own people in Richmond constantly pushing Mason’s issues and needs. We form relationships with elected officials who can also speak to our needs. VA universities band together to advocate for higher education, but unfortunately that sometimes falls on deaf ears because higher education institutions have other revenue, whereas, many other state agencies do not.
    - Mason is beginning to form relationships with candidates running for office, before they are in office. President Cabrera is chairing a committee related to this and the upcoming governor election next year in order to press Mason’s needs even more (although it is a committee with other VA schools).
- Question: What was the final answer about transferring unused course credits from an employee to a member of their family?

- Response: The state forbids this with state funds, which is what we currently use for the tuition waivers. If we were able to fund this another way, through donations or something else, we could do this. It's hard to find another way to fund it because it's recurring and a lot of money.
  - ODU has something like this, but they instituted it before the state forbid it, so it got grandfathered. Linda Harber & President Cabrera still said they would look into how ODU does this.
- Issue: Sci Tech name is confusing because there are many places it still says Prince William.
  - Response: Let the leadership know about inconsistencies. We noted that PatriotWeb still says PW. It could be argued that is still the physical location; however, staff from that campus explained that it confuses new students. For example, when they take a bus from Fairfax, they wait for a bus called Prince William, but the bus says Sci Tech.
- Question: What are the VA higher education tiers and how would moving to a higher one help?
  - Response: Currently, at the tier we're in (2), we have to get approval about everything down building design when building a new one.
  - To move a tier, we have to meet certain criteria, as well as, demonstrate financial strength (I.E. we must have certain credit ratings – why we're trying to cut back on debt).
  - This year, we got approval to do a pilot tier (2.5) with JMU (and possibly ODU): we're getting a little bit more autonomy, but not quite at the level of tier 3.
- Rumor: Are we starting a medical school?
  - Response: We don't quite have the funding or resources for a medical school, though it is on people's radar. Medical schools are great for the school (brings in money, brings in research, etc.), but it also helps the community surrounding the school. There are currently no medical schools in Northern Virginia, though there are some close by (D.C. and MD).
  - Instead, and for the time being, Mason is strengthening biomedical research and partnering with INOVA.
- Request: Keep staff in mind while building Robinson. Staff often spend more time in a building than faculty, who are teaching classes elsewhere, and not in their offices as much.
  - Response: President Cabrera says that the designers are giving them very creative ideas about flexible spaces, but it's hard to push that with the faculty.
    - They are gathering stats on how much time faculty spend in their offices.