

Professional and Scientific Council Peer Advocacy Committee

FY21 Annual Report

Committee Members

Robyn Goldy, Clayton Byrd, Katie Getting, Lesya Hassall, Misty Zimmerman, Lindsay Moeller (withdrawn from committee August 2020), Jacob Larsen (chair)

During the past year, members of the Peer Advocacy committee discussed a variety of topics and participated in several meetings with individual staff members and with representatives of different ISU offices, including the Ombuds Office and the ISU Wellness Office, etc. The topics discussed include childcare, COVID-19 effects on staff, phase-in of the new P&S Classification and compensation structure, employee Interest Groups, UHR Workflex initiative, supervisor training, a variety of newsletter topics, and Peer Advocacy committee responsibilities and tasks. Not all discussions necessitated action on the part of our committee. Those that did are laid out in this report. At the end, we discuss which topics the committee might consider addressing in the coming year.

Connections with constituents:

Occasionally, our committee is called upon to speak with constituents regarding a variety of issue and concerns about their professional experience at Iowa State University. One or more members of the committee will follow up with constituent. Often this interaction results in a face-to-face or virtual meeting and committee members will share their knowledge of ISU policies and help guide the constituent toward appropriate resources. We had four one-hour+ consultations with individual P&S staff members, between August 2020 and May 2021.

A significant part of the Peer Advocacy committee charge is to inform constituents about resources available to them at Iowa State University. This year, our committee committed to submitting several articles for the monthly Professional and Scientific Council newsletter covering the following topics: The Employee Assistance Program, Employee Interest Groups, The SHOP Food Pantry, Semester in Rewind, Winter Weather, Opportunities for staff to advise student organizations, FMLA, and mental health assistance. In addition, John-Burnett Larkins contributed a newsletter on applying for COVID-19 alternative work arrangements and the Executive Committee contributed a newsletter on flex plan changes.

Connection with University Ombuds Service:

On October 8th, 2020, staff from the ombuds service contracted by ISU following the departure of Deanna Clingan-Fischer met with members of the Peer Advocacy Committee and the Council Executive Committee. The purpose was to get introduced and discuss typical topics and issues dealt with in the past by Deanna. We also engaged with the ombuds service in January 2021 on the topic of their inability to participate in employee performance reviews, which was triggered by an Extension staff member issue.

Connection with ISU WellBeing:

At a February 2021 online meeting with Stephanie Downs of the ISU Wellness Office we discussed how P&S staff might get more involved with Adventure2 and the multitude of new offerings available to

staff. One outcome of this meeting was that we recommended to the Executive Committee that Stephanie Downs be given speaking time at our March council meeting, which she eventually did.

Employee Interest Groups

During Fall 2020, the Peer Advocacy committee made a substantial effort to re-energize and revitalize the employee interest groups. Led by Lesya Hassall, we interfaced with several group facilitators and surveyed their challenges. Many had found it challenging to keep their groups active during the past year due to COVID-19 affecting their work and personal lives. Following a discussion with Amy Ward and Sara Parris it was decided to leave the groups dormant until sometime during Spring 2022.

Other Topics

Paid Parental Leave

The issue of paid parental leave was raised by a constituent and our committee took on the task for researching ISU policies and comparing them to policies of Big 10 and Big 12 universities along with a few other institutions that ISU compares itself to. We provided a comprehensive overview to the Executive committee and were subsequently charged with researching PTO and benefits at these same institutions to provide a more detailed basis for comparing them with ISU. This work is ongoing as of June 2021.

Future Considerations

During the coming year, the Peer Advocacy Committee might consider continuing and/or expanding upon the following topics.

- Revitalize the Employee Interest Groups.
- Continue to write newsletter articles for the monthly P&S Council newsletter
- Maintain the connection with the ISU ombuds service and discuss issues relevant to staff concerns.
- Maintain the connection with the ISU Wellness Office and discuss how staff may better benefit from programming and what kinds of programming staff might like.
- Contribute to the discussion of WorkFlex and work-from-home programs.
- Remain informed about the work of the Child Care Task Force and discuss the topic as needed.
- Focus on the topic of leadership training for staff supervisors and uniform, detailed, and comprehensive performance evaluations for all staff.