

Professional and Scientific Council Peer Advocacy Committee

FY20 Annual Report

Committee Members

Lindsay Moeller, Robyn Goldy, Susan DeBlieck, Dustin Moscoso, Leslie Ginder (withdrawn from Council December 2019), Jacob Larsen (chair)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 UHR, the Ombuds Office, ISU Wellness, etc. The topics discussed include child care, employee compensation and benefits, P&S Classification, the Campus Climate Survey, disability awareness, Adventure2, employee Interest Groups, cold weather preparedness, retention of employees, gym membership reimbursement, grievance policies, employee leadership training, a variety of newsletter topics, Peer Advocacy committee responsibilities and tasks, and COVID-19 preparedness and effects on P&S staff. 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 meeting and committee members will share their knowledge of ISU policies and help guide the constituent toward appropriate resources. We had two consultations with individual P&S staff members, one in August and one in December. The August meeting was attended by Jacob Larsen, Robyn Goldy and Leslie Ginder and the December meeting was attended by Jacob Larsen and Barry McCroskey. The latter was included because the constituent asked to meet with the P&S Council Reps for Vet Med.

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 that explored ISU resources or policies. Article topics included: Winter Weather, Internal Job Applications, Student Organization advising, Blue 365 Benefits, and Staff Tuition Waivers. In addition, Stephanie Downs of the ISU Wellness Office contributed a newsletter on Adventure2 and Wellness Office activities during the COVID-19 pandemic for employees working from home.

Connection with University Ombuds Officer:

On September 20th, 2019, the University Ombudswoman, Deanna Clingan-Fischer, met with members of the Peer Advocacy Committee and the Council Executive Committee. Deanna discussed with us various issues on the topic of the ISU grievance procedures which she had found different employees had difficulty understanding and navigating. Jacob Larsen subsequently met with Deanna again on November 11th for a follow-up meeting.

Grievance Policies discussion with University Human Resources (UHR):

This year, Peer Advocacy and Policies and Procedures met to discuss UHR grievance policies on January 9th, 2020. Present were representatives of UHR, including Andrea Little. The discussion served to clarify questions and concerns about the grievance policies and procedures that P&S staff must follow, which had been brought up by the ISU Ombudswoman Deanna Clingan-Fischer. The meeting served to clarify several issues and to point out where UHR might want to clarify their forms and the information provided to staff undergoing this process. It was decided that John Hascall, the Policies and Procedures committee chair would follow up with UHR on the topics discussed and the actions that were agreed upon.

The Peer Advocacy Chair also participated in an informational meeting with UHR about the Classification and Compensation project, together with the Executive Committee on February 17th, 2020.

Connection with ISU WellBeing:

At an April 27th online meeting with Stephanie Downs of the ISU Wellness Office, which was attended by Jacob Larsen and Dustin Moscoso, we discussed how P&S staff might get more involved with Adventure2. One of the results of this meeting was that Stephanie Downs agreed to write an article for the May edition of the P&S Council newsletter on this topic.

Interest Group (formerly Affinity Group) Project

During this year, the Peer Advocacy committee has made a substantial effort to operationalize the employee interest groups. We started by surveying staff about who might be interested in facilitating or co-facilitating pilot interest groups on several topics, such as Books and Mindfulness. The ISU Wellness Office sponsored a lunch during which Jacob Larsen and Dustin Moscoso discussed their tasks with them and showed them how to use Canvas to manage online organizations for their interest groups. Subsequently, Jacob Larsen provided each group with a Canvas organization template, including graphics, and he and Dustin Moscoso regularly followed up with group facilitators and offered support. Below is a list of the established groups and their membership numbers in Canvas:

- American Sign Language – 26
- Book Club – 68
- Creative Arts – 46
- Games – 54
- Gardening – 20
- Mindfulness – 70
- Parenting – 8
- Recreation – 5

Future Considerations

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

- Continue following up with Interest Group facilitators and supporting initiatives to try to increase group membership.
- Commit to writing newsletter articles for monthly P&S Council newsletter

- Maintain connection with ISU ombudswoman and discuss issues relevant to staff concerns.
- Maintain connection with ISU Wellness Office and discuss how staff may better benefit from programming and what kinds of programming staff might like.
- Discuss and provide relevant recommendations for COVID-19 issues and topics affecting staff.
- Discuss any topics related to Summer 2020 phase-in of new classification and compensation structure.
- Remain informed about the work of the Child Care Task Force and discuss topic as needed.
- Focus on the topic of leadership training for staff supervisors and uniform, detailed, and comprehensive performance evaluations for all staff