Members Present: Jim Streicher, Lynn Fox, Cameron Mott, Tukonya Vereen, Lisa Bellamy, Debbie Burch, Misti Williams, Dee Braswell, Diane Wilson, Derek Doss, Shane Tay, Sandi Hatcher, Dan Lawless and Lisa Bernadyn.

Members Absent: Lee Carter and Kerry Lord.

Approval of Minutes: A motion to accept the June 23, 2016 minutes was made by Cameron Mott and seconded by Tukonya Vereen. The minutes were approved by the members.

Old Business

Follow up discussion on the following items:

Suggestion:

- “That the university provide “This call may be recorded for quality assurance” to all or departments that frequently deal with angry people. That way there is no question as to the quality of the phone call. It is really the only way that employees can feel secure.”

  J. Streicher reported the following information after his conversation from Abdallah Haddad, Chief Information & Technology Officer. “This may be more of a policy question for the administration as to whether or not we would want to implement this as a university. He suggested that we should go in that direction for feedback, as ITS could not implement something like this without the administrations direction to do so.”

  D. Lawless will address this with Dr. Byington, Provost and Executive Vice President, and President DeCenzo.

  D. Lawless sent an email to President DeCenzo on behalf of the council, asking that the feasibility of such a system be considered by the Executive Council. Mr. Lawless also volunteered that the Staff Advisory Council would be happy to assist that process in any way.

  D. Lawless reported there has not been a formal response.

  D. Lawless reported the Executive Council is taking this suggestion under review.

  D. Lawless reported the most recent update from President DeCenzo confirmed this is currently under discussion.

- “As a fairly new staff member, I am interested in moving forward with a master’s degree. When I attempt to find the policy regarding compensation, I cannot find anything other than the tuition waiver/reimbursement policy. Since appropriate approval is required for these programs, will compensation follow and what is that policy? Some of my colleagues have mentioned that it comes with a salary increase. Thank you for your time.”

  D. Lawless spoke to Kim Sherfesee, Director of Human Resources/EEO Officer, regarding this suggestion. It was reported at this time there are a number of policies that are being worked on. There is not a formal response at present time.
D. Lawless reported after speaking with Kim Sherfesee we are still waiting for a formal response.

\[ \textit{D. Lawless shared the following response from Kim Sherfesee, “Receipt of an advanced degree does not automatically result in a salary increase. HREO is currently updating the Compensation Plan policy. We will be glad to provide more detailed information when the policy is finalized.”} \]

- “Should have a concrete walk way between Lackey Chapel and the Woods going to parking lot.”

S. Hatcher will address this suggestion with Rein Mungo, Director Facilities Planning & Management.

\[ \textit{S. Hatcher reported she spoke with Mark Avant in regards to the request for the Lackey Chapel walkway. This particular area has been in discussion prior to this request. Dr. Dyer approved the walkway and it is under contract now. The exact spot for the walkway now has to be determined in accordance with ADA standards. It will not be started until after the crosswalks are completed.} \]

- “Is it possible to get a Lost and Found lock box put in the main hallway outside those offices for after hours, weekend and out-of-the-office drops? Many times I have come back from the weekend or a meeting to find keys hanging on my door or a phone propped up on the floor. A box in the hallway outside the suite near my office would be very helpful. Of course, larger items could not be put in there. Thank you!”

D. Lawless will address this suggestion with the appropriate department.

\[ \textit{D. Lawless did address this suggestion with Rein Mungo, Director Facilities Planning & Management. Mr. Mungo responded he would need to know where the box would need to be installed and approval of each Dean for the buildings.} \]

After discussion among the council members it was determined D. Braswell will speak to Chief Roper regarding a lock box being installed outside of Public Safety.

- “Due to the recent bathroom law- it would be nice if all of the older restroom stalls on campus such as in Kimbel, Baxley, Kingston etc. where the stalls have large gaps between the walls and doors were updated to resemble the newer stalls in HTC and Lib Jackson, where there are no gaps in the walls and doors and both are closer to the floor for privacy. This may also prevent potential title IX issues in restrooms.”

D. Lawless will address this suggestion with the appropriate area.

\[ \textit{D. Lawless reported he sent this suggestion to Sallie Clarkson, Associate Provost for Academic Administration and Rein Mungo, Director Facilities Planning & Management.} \]

New Business

Suggestion Boxes:

- “I am writing to voice my concerns about policy number FAST-HREO 223 as an alumni and employee of Coastal Carolina University.”
I want to begin by stating that being able to work at my Alma Mater is a privilege and an honor. My previous experiences as a student affords me the opportunity to empathize with and understand the students I serve.

When I began my employment here at the University, one of the benefits of being an employee was to be able to continue my education if I so chose to. That was one of the benefits that peaked my interest because it allowed me to work and express my love for my University as well as still be a part of the campus life and further my education.

However, in the last year that benefit has changed dramatically and in my opinion, the change was not for the better. Since this change has come about, that benefit has become a hindrance.

The new policy requires that an employee commit to continuing with employment at Coastal for 24 months after the completion of a course or the cost of the course will be deducted from the employee’s salary or annual/sick leave that is available at the time of departure.

In understanding that this is the first year this policy has been in effect and that there will be a ‘learning curve’, I have found numerous instances where this new policy is not efficient and has made what once was a benefit now a hindrance to all employees that partake of it.

First, let’s began with the 100% withdrawal period stipulation. While I completely understand the financial aspect of this concept, you must take into consideration the non-traditional students that will be using the tuition waiver. Many of us (University employees) are just getting back into the swing of attending college and may not be certain of how well a course will go before the end of the 100% withdrawal period. For employees that are taking an undergraduate course, they have a bit more time to assess the nature of the class and possibly evaluate their success because some may have 2 or 3 class meetings before the end of the 100% withdrawal period. For an employee taking a graduate course, with this stipulation, that will only allow them 1 class meeting (if the professor decides to meet the first week) to assess an entire semester. This leaves the student with making a rushed decision and oftentimes those decisions are the most unfortunate decisions. Take the following scenario into consideration.

Perhaps, an employee that has worked at the University for 10 years has previously earned a bachelor’s degree and is wanting to take a graduate level course just to brush up on their knowledge. They have not been in a classroom since the early 2000’s and are feeling a bit intimidated because it has been about 16 years since they have been in a classroom. They have never taken a graduate level course but they wish to challenge themselves. So they enroll in the course. Under the old benefit, this employee could have taken this course and decided to withdraw before the ‘W’ period was over because they felt as though they had given all that they could but even that was not enough to complete the course with a satisfactory grade. The student (employee) knew that receiving a grade of ‘W’ would not harm their academic record but the experience of being back in a college setting made them realize what self-improvements needed to be made before attempting another course. The old benefit promoted self-improvement from gaining knowledge to be used to better, not only the Coastal community, but also the world, as well as improving upon oneself personally and professionally.

Under the new policy, this student (employee) will not be able to experience the education Coastal has to offer without it either negatively affecting their academic record or their life personally. Let me explain, if the student (employee) remains in the course and receives an unsatisfactory grade, their academic record
was just tarnished because they missed the 100% refund deadline and cannot afford to pay for the course without a student loan (not all employees are fortunate enough to have the money on hand to pay for a course).

As for the 24 month commitment, it prohibits a Coastal employee from excelling and taking advantage of other opportunities that are waiting for them. The knowledge that was gained from the course will possibly go to waste. I say this because the only Master’s degree that is offered here at CCU that every (theoretically) department will take (in terms of employee raises) is the MBA. However, not every employee is business savvy nor has an interest in being so. Maybe the MS in Marine and Wetlands Studies, for example, would be better suited for the Administrative Assistant that works in English but because the Master’s they earned does not apply to their current position, they are now stuck. They cannot leave the University to pursue their passion for 24 months without paying back one of their employee ‘benefits’. This employee has to pass up on a number of opportunities that may have yielded them a higher salary in the field in which they love. If the student (employee) is to excel in the course, they are still restrained to remain here at CCU for 24 months without payment penalty. They too are in the same situation of missing out on opportunities.

Secondly, this new policy applies to every course and not just to those employees that has earned a degree. This means that every employee that just wants to take a course of interest, must commit to CCU for 24 months of pay a penalty for wanting to expand upon their knowledge base. In my opinion, this is obsessive. If the employee has not earned a degree or completed 18+ hours of graduate work or completed a certificate, committing to CCU for a semester after the completed course would suffice. 24 months and the payment penalty for early departure for 1 course is absolutely absurd.

I have spoken with numerous colleagues across campus about this before writing this letter. We all seem to share the same views on this topic. One thing for sure that we all share is the notion that life happens. Tragedy strikes and causes us to uproot and relocate unexpectedly. In some cases, it may take all of our savings to do this and to be hit with the pay back penalty for the 1 class that we took last year on top of everything else that life has dealt may be just enough to bring a person to their knees. On the other hand, life may have seen fit to bless our significant other with a career opportunity that requires relocation. Even though we are in this move together, our finances took a huge hit during the flood when our home was damaged and now that we must pay back the penalty for the 1 course we took during the fall 2015 semester, we have to borrow the money to move which creates more debt. Now keep in mind that these are just situations that I have created for the sake of demonstration but the message of life happens is still the same.

As an employee, I do not understand why we must be punished for taking advantage of a benefit and be ridiculed when life happens to us. As an alumni, I find it incredibly disheartening that some of the CCU employees that have not experienced the education here, may not get to because they do not want the 24 month restraint on them simply because they know that life happens.

As an employee, I would recommend a complete revision of the policy and for these revisions to be ‘grandfathered’ back to the original effective date of the policy. I understand the concept behind creating the policy, however, the manner in which the policy is currently operating has completely stripped the employee benefit away from us. I would suggest allowing there to be restrictions for different groups. Such as:
Students (employees) that have not taken 18+ hours in undergraduate or graduate coursework, has not completed a certificate or has not earned a degree must commit to working at CCU for at least 1 semester following the completion of the course(s).

Students (employees) that have completed a certificate, or have taken 18+ hours in a particular major but has not completed a degree must commit to working at CCU for 1 full academic year following the completion of the last course(s).

Students (employees) that have earned a degree for completed 18+ hours of graduate coursework must commit to working at CCU for 24 months following the completion of the degree/course(s).

The repayment schedule should be adjusted accordingly based on the tuition rates and the employee’s departure time. A complete repayment of the course option should be added as well. Extracting the funds from the employee’s salary and/or leave time should not be the only option. Life happens and last paycheck funds may be needed for moving expenses and leave could rollover to another state institution.

In terms of 100% refund during the withdrawal period, I am not too sure about this aspect. I can understand the University’s standpoint on the finances but are we not investing in our employees? Is that not as important?

When I heard of this policy, I had no idea it entailed this many ‘hooks’. Once I figured out what I could have possibly gotten myself into, I quickly dropped out of CCU. I really wanted to expand upon my knowledge base and my career but the expense of doing that was and still is too high. It’s extremely sad to me because I have waited since I graduated with my undergraduate degree for CCU to expand the University’s Masters offerings and I had finally gotten my wish, only for it to be snatched away from me during my first year in the program by the stipulations of this new policy. Yes, I am a victim of this policy. Although, I have no intentions on leaving CCU and I’ve been at this University for 12 years now, I am writing this letter because I do not believe this policy to be fair to CCU employees as a whole and I am asking for change. Thank you.”

D. Lawless will address this suggestion with President DeCenzo and BJ Landrum, Vice President University Compliance and HR.

Web Page Comments:

Suggestion:

- “I have heard several people discuss how unappealing our hold music is and in experiencing it myself, I would have to agree. I watched a video that was posted on FB by Coastal Carolina Chanticleers on the National Championship reactions. In the background of the video, you hear the instrumental version of Rooster. This song is played at many of our home games. My suggestion would be to replace the current music with this instrumental version. This would really represent our University.”

D. Lawless will address this suggestion with Phillip Powell, Chair of the Music department.

- “I know that many of us have tons of t-shirts that we may have only wore once or twice and sometimes it becomes very challenging trying to find “professional” teal attire. Therefore, I would like to make a suggestion that the University’s dress code policy include the option of wearing teal t-shirts on Tuesdays as a way to continue promoting and encouraging school spirit. Go Chants!”

L. Bellamy will address this suggestion with Kim Sherfesee, Director of Human Resources/EO Officer.
Additional Discussion items by members:

- D. Lawless asked the council to review the Strategic Plan, specifically 5.3.5. Mr. Lawless asked each council member to be prepared at the next meeting with suggestions and ideas on how Staff Advisory can improve/strengthen their advocacy role.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:00.

Next Meeting: The next SAC meeting will be held August 4, 2016 in Edwards 164.