

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

PROPOSAL 23-02

(Voting Units: Full Senate)

TASK FORCE ON CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF

1. A Task Force will be created jointly by the Senate and administration to address several issues of present concern to professional staff at Michigan Tech. The specific issues are these:

- Opportunities for Promotion
- Rewards or Recognition for Activities Related to Instruction
- Rewards or Recognition for Contributions to Research
- Rewards or Recognition for Professional Development
- Rewards or Recognition for Development of University Policy

2. Background

The 493 professional staff at Michigan Tech do not have the protection that tenure or a union contract provide. Many staff members feel that their contributions to the University are undervalued. When the Senate Professional Staff Policy Committee surveyed the staff, the issues listed above were identified as the principal concerns.

A report written by an MTU College of Engineering committee in 1998 had similar findings across four groups of employees (non-tenure track faculty, general fund professional staff, sponsored research staff, and computing support staff). That report was sent to the provost in 1998, but apparently was not acted upon.

Recently the University has begun to investigate several of these issues as they relate only to the staff involved with information technology, for example system administrators. This is apparently in response to the large number of these staff leaving the University for positions elsewhere.

The Senate Professional Staff Policy Committee recommends action on these specific issues as a means of both enhancing the current classification/compensation system, and increasing the retention of quality employees.

3. Task Force Composition

The Joint Task Force to address these issues should be made up of nine persons as follows:

- 2 faculty members, elected by the Senate
- 3 professional staff, elected by the Senate, with one being a Professional Staff Policy Committee member
- 3 professional staff members, selected by the President
- 1 *ex officio* member knowledgeable about classification/compensation systems, appointed by the President

4. Charge

The Task Force will develop and submit to the Senate a series of proposals addressing the points of staff concern listed here. The proposals should be based on the experience and knowledge of the members of

the task force, on the study of staff policies at comparable and peer academic institutions, and on interviews with appropriate staff, administrators, and faculty at Michigan Tech. The internal organization of the Task Force will be its own responsibility. The proposals generated by the Task Force will be reported directly to the Senate. The Task Force will be expected to complete its work within seven calendar months from its creation. The charge to the Task Force may be modified by agreement of the Senate, administration, and the Task Force members.

5. Discussion of Issues

Opportunities for Promotion: A lack of a career ladder identifying promotional opportunities where available to individuals has led to the perception that many positions at Michigan Tech are "dead-end" jobs.

Rewards or Recognition for Activities Related to Instruction: Many staff (lab supervisors, training specialists, etc.) have instructional duties, some design course material as well as teach students. These efforts are vital to the academic mission of the University, but the Hay system used in position classification does not have any way to recognize these contributions. Instead the Hay system is focused on how much supervision individuals have over funds and personnel.

Rewards or Recognition for Contributions to Research: Research staff often contribute greatly to efforts directed at obtaining grants from outside sources and hence generate significant funds for the University, but are not recognized for these efforts. Sponsored research staff often work long, unpredictable hours as well as deal with the uncertainty inherent in soft-money positions. The current system does not have the flexibility in many cases to reward these efforts with increased salaries, salary differentials for night shifts, maintenance salaries that could tide staff over between grants, etc.

Rewards or Recognition for Professional Development: The current classification/compensation system has no mechanism to reward individuals who make concerted efforts to earn advanced degrees or take specialized training to bring areas of greater expertise to their jobs.

Rewards or Recognition for Development of University Policy: Many of the professional service department staff (Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Affairs, Career Center, etc.) are responsible for designing the policies and procedures as well as implementing them. The system does not adequately differentiate between formulating policy and merely implementing procedures formed by others.

6. Value of Addressing these Issues

Addressing and acting on these issues so that professional staff are satisfactorily recognized and rewarded at the University, can result in retention of motivated individuals, and inspire staff to contribute more to the well-being of Michigan Tech.

Draft of 9 April 2002