Santa Monica College Personnel Policies Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: 1:00pm, Tuesday, September 21, 2021
Location: Electronic Meeting
Present: Andrew Nestler (Chair), Sherri Lee-Lewis (Vice-Chair), Natalie Arps-Bumbera, Janelle DeStefano, Nate Donahue, Chris Grant, Mitch Heskel, Steve Hunt

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 1:00pm.

II. **Public Comments:** None

III. **Announcements:** The Committee welcomes Nate back to its membership.

The Committee's final drafts of AR 7360 (Discipline and Dismissal of Regular and Contract Employees) and AR 7210.4 (Student Club Advisor Responsibilities) were approved unanimously by the Senate Executive Committee and Academic Senate in Spring 2021. Superintendent/President Jeffery signed off on these regulations, and they now appear on the SMC Board Policy manual website, with the club advisor AR renumbered to 7210.5.

IV. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the May 11 meeting were moved by Mitch, seconded by Steve, and approved unanimously.

V. **AR 7330 (Communicable Disease) and BP 7335 (Health Examinations):** AR 7330 is a new regulation that combines the text of AR 3110 (AIDS Education Implementation) and AR 3113 (Bloodborne Pathogens Standard Plan). The material from AR 3110 appears to be obsolete for several reasons. In particular, Sherri said that she has never heard of the steering committee mentioned in this AR having a meeting. We wondered if the material from AR 3113, which refers to the District maintaining an Exposure Control Plan regarding occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens, should be updated and perhaps revised to refer to the Emergency Operations Team and airborne viruses such as the COVID-19 coronavirus.

AR 7330 contains references to BP/AR 7335 (Health Examinations). BP 7335 exists, and like AR 7330, it refers to a non-existent AR 7335. The Committee had received several drafts of language proposed by the League for an AR 7335. Sherri said that most likely the District would not wish to create an AR 7335, and she proposed that the District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC) Human Resources Planning Subcommittee and legal counsel review BP/AR 7335.

Andrew will contact Daniel Phillips, Director of Safety and Risk Management, and pass on the Committee's concerns regarding these ARs.

VI. **AR 7120.1 (Procedure for Hiring Full-Time Contract Faculty):** The Committee most recently reviewed and revised this regulation between Spring 2018 and Fall 2019. In June, Jamar London spoke with Andrew about his desire that the application process be as equitable as possible. He is particularly interested in the requirement that an applicant submit at least two letters of recommendation for their application to be considered complete. Jamar's concern is that the submission of such letters is not within the control of the applicant and that this may be a barrier to equity.

In 2017, the Senate endorsed a set of recommendations on the hiring process from its Equity and Diversity Committee. One of these recommendations that has since been implemented is the following: "Human Resources [has clarified] instructions on current application modules to indicate that notification to submit letters of recommendation will not be sent until an application is closed and the applicant has received a confirmation number."

Sherri reported that letters were not reviewed by this year's search committee for the Vice-President of Academic Affairs position. They were reviewed only after the applicants selected for an interview were notified, but prior to the interview itself. Sherri stated that she believes that the pool was more diverse than usual because the applications of everyone that applied were reviewed. HR looks at diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender, and age when analyzing applicant pools.

In August, Andrew and Sherri discussed the possibility of Human Resources pulling data from the last two faculty recruitment periods, which would show the total number of applications received, and the numbers of complete and incomplete applications. Without this data, there may be no objective evidence for revisiting this issue.

The Committee discussed letters being required at the beginning of the screening process. Arguments for revision (either eliminating the requirement for letters or moving it to a time after the application process has closed) include the following:

(1) Recommenders can be unreliable.

(2) If an applicant identifies the job opening shortly before the closing date, there may not be an appropriate amount of time to request letters of recommendation.

(3) Applicant pools of completed applications show a lack of diversity as compared to our local demographics and it is the letters of recommendation requirement that often prevents an applicant from applying or disqualifies an applicant from continuing in the selection process.

Arguments against revision (i.e., for maintaining the letters of recommendation requirement) include the following:

(1) Letters can be particularly helpful for adjunct faculty members who work at multiple colleges, and who might be involved in various initiatives and projects at campuses other than the one where they are applying.

(2) Given the College's stated desire for diversity in applicant pools and within the faculty, letters of recommendation can speak to the applicant's membership in an underrepresented group in higher education and to their dedication to serving groups underrepresented in higher education.

(3) Letters of recommendation can provide evidence of an applicant's commitment to professional growth and service, teaching and communication skills, and potential for overall effectiveness at a California community college, and SMC in particular.

(4) Instructors write letters of recommendation for their own students, and it would be hypocritical to suggest that these letters aren't valuable or are unethical. Would this lead to the College disallowing instructors from writing letters of recommendation?

(5) Applicants often direct significant time and energy to find mentors or other references who are capable of writing and submitting excellent letters, and these applicants deserve to have these letters read. In part, it speaks to their ability to form relationships, be organized, and follow through.

(6) The College does not require that letters of recommendation come from any specific type of person.

(7) There is no limit to the number of letters of recommendation. If an applicant is not getting the appropriate follow through from one author, they can ask another. HR allows applicants to check and see if their file is complete.

(8) The idea of changing the regulation's requirement of submitting two letters to an encouragement or recommendation could itself lead to inequitable scenarios, with some applicants submitting letters and others not doing so.

(9) If letters were to be solicited only after the paper screening and candidates had been selected for interviews, the remaining components of the selection process could be significantly delayed.

Generally, faculty members indicated that they do or would find value in reading letters of recommendation while on screening committees. This discussion generally mirrored the one that the Committee had when it reviewed AR 7120.1 two years ago.

VII. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.

For agendas and minutes, visit www.smc.edu/ppc
Next scheduled electronic meeting: 1:00pm, Tuesday, October 19