Commission on Classified Staff Affairs  
January 28, 2004 – 3:00-5:00 PM  
325 Burruss Hall

Present: Judy Alford, Althea Aschmann, Karen Boone, Jean Brickey, Teresa Lyons, Kellie Morris, Pat Rodgers for Judy Lilly, Becky Saylors, Linda Woodard, John Wooge

Absent: Greg Brown, Barbara Crawford, Trudy Epperly, Rachel Holloway, Charles Stott

Guests: Sue Ellen Crocker, Staff Senate President; Dick Harshberger, Leadership Development; Larry Hincker, Associate Vice President, University Relations; Mark Owczarski, Director of News & Information, University Relations

Chair Jean Brickey called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. The agenda was approved as presented. The minutes of the November 19, 2003, meeting were approved electronically.

1. Communications: Larry Hincker

With the university being very decentralized, getting information out to faculty, staff, and students can be difficult. Many offices have communication responsibilities including University Relations, Personnel Services, Office of Transportation, and the Controller’s Office, depending upon the particular situation. There are three main venues of communication on campus: Spectrum, email, and paper mail. Each has limitations. Spectrum is issued bi-weekly. The dean, director and department head (DDDHH) email and paper distributions lists are informal and were compiled ad hoc. One of the difficulties is getting the information further disseminated. University Relations is working on a news link from the Virginia Tech home page, which will have daily notices, news items, and events providing information for faculty, staff, and students on a daily basis. However, access is an issue for some employees who do not work in an office or have easy access to a computer.

Getting information out quickly in an emergency situation is also a challenge. Public media, email, the university’s web site, and the Personnel Services telephone tree are all used as necessary. University Relations can now also send out batch PhoneMail messages. When asked if delayed opening and closing announcements could be made earlier than 6:00 a.m., Hincker responded that generally they could not. These decisions are made based on four criteria: sidewalks, parking lots, outlaying roads, and the Blacksburg Transit Service. It takes time to assemble the necessary information. With the many varying shifts worked, it is virtually impossible to find a time that would work for everyone.

2. Update on Computer Access and Computer Literacy Training: Linda Woodard

It is estimated that 8 to 10 percent of university employees do not have easy access to email. Many of these employees are concentrated in Physical Plant and Student Programs. Personnel Services is currently working on strategies to improve computer access, and to establish training for basic computer use.

3. Committee Reports:
   - Employee Benefits – Becky Saylors  
     The committee did not meet in January.
• Staff Senate – Jean Brickey  
Forms have been sent out to the staff associations for nominations for next year.

• CEOD: Jean Brickey  
The January meeting was cancelled due to weather.

4. Other Business

• Officers of the Staff Senate met with President Steger, Minnis Ridenour, and Larry Hincker on the proposed charter universities. Under the charter, the Board of Visitors would run the university. This would give the university more autonomy over its budget. The University of Virginia and the College of William & Mary have been working with Virginia Tech on the proposed legislation. From a staff perspective, there may be concerns over what this means to current employees, their compensation, and benefits. The proposed charter would allow the university greater flexibility and create additional options. Employees would not lose any rights or benefits.

• Delegate Morgan Griffith has proposed legislation that would require all state universities go through a bidding process for food services. Virginia Tech food service is already low cost. A meeting with Griffith is scheduled, and it is hoped that he will withdraw the bill.

• Sue Ellen Crocker asked about tax sheltering paid overtime for employees. In many cases, workers in departments such as Physical Plant and Student Programs receive paid overtime. This can put employees into a higher tax bracket and make them ineligible for certain tax credits. Linda Woodard will work with Doug Martin on getting information to employees on this option.

5. Future Meetings

The next meeting is scheduled for February 25. Speakers invited for upcoming meetings will include Kurt Krause, the new Vice President for Business Affairs; Doug Martin, University Benefits Manager; and Minnis Ridenour, Executive Vice President.

6. Announcements:

• Two additional members are needed for the Staff Appreciation Day planning committee. If members know of anyone with an interest, contact Sue Ellen Crocker. Meetings will start in February or March. Most of the work involves planning games or activities as well as helping during the event. Staff Appreciation Day is the Wednesday after graduation.

• The commission chairs will meet with President Steger again with progress reports on items discussed at their fall meeting.

• Sue Ellen Crocker will attend the next Board of Visitors meeting to lobby for a classified member on the board.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM.