

College of Arts and Sciences
ASSEMBLY MEETING MINUTES
March 21, 2017
Oakland Center, Room 128

Members present: *Andrews, Battles, Bekele, Benz, Berven, D., Berven, K., Cheng, Corso, Dulio, Freed, Herold, Jones, McDonald, Miller, Navin, Pobutsky, Reger, Rigstad, Spagnuolo, Tucker, Walwema, Wang, Welling, Westrick*

Members absent: *Barry, Eis, Guest, Orces, Roth, Yang*

Dean Corcoran called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

A. MINUTES OF February 28, 2017

The minutes of the meeting of February 28, 2017, were approved.

B. TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

Dean Corcoran introduced Jan Baker (financial analyst, CAS) who was present to discuss a problem that exists with the present CAS travel reimbursement policy. The CAS cannot continue to do travel reimbursement in the present way. The difficulty relates in particular to the second trips taken by faculty members during the academic year. Presently, second trips get reimbursed more than 60 days after the travel takes place, but this is not acceptable to Internal Revenue Service policies. So a new system has to be developed to satisfy the IRS, but one that will still make it possible to use all the money the CAS has been given for travel while at the same time providing reimbursements within the 60-day time frame required by the IRS. Mr. Corcoran noted that the CAS Executive Committee had discussed possible alternative processes at Executive Committee meetings, and they are now requesting input from the Assembly on this matter. He asked Executive Committee members to share the ideas they had come up with, and the following are the highlights of the discussion that ensued.

Ms. Reger brought up one possibility they had thought of, which was that every faculty member would have an 'account' each year with money to be used as the person wants throughout the year, which she said would work if faculty members were able to let the Dean's office know early enough when they would be traveling on their second trip so that leftover money could be distributed.

Ms. Miller pointed out that one impediment to finding a solution to the IRS problem is that most faculty members have an uneven travel pattern and so it is hard to predict when trips will be taken, and who will take that second trip in any given year.

Ms. Reger mentioned another idea the Executive Committee had come up with, which was for department chairs to be given a pot of money to divide up among faculty members for travel. However, she added that they foresaw potential problems with this idea because there are departments in which faculty members travel more than in others, and within a given department some faculty members travel more than others which would make a fair and equitable distribution

difficult to figure out. She said two other thoughts the Executive Committee had come up with were to distribute money according to rank or to distribute money according to what faculty members do at conferences.

Ms. Pobutsky suggested that money could be given only to faculty members who present papers at conferences. But Ms. Miller pointed out that there are many different kinds of conferences, some small and some large, some near and some far, and faculty members attend various conferences for a wide variety of reasons, not just to present a paper but also to listen to papers, attend sessions, and to meet people.

Mr. Corso asked whether a tax consultant would be able to help find a solution because it is basically an IRS problem.

Ms. Baker agreed that this might be helpful and added that although OU has a tax consultant, a solution from that source has not been forthcoming.

Mr. Berven suggested that one solution could be to establish deadline dates for travel requests more in advance than is presently required, provide the form for faculty members to estimate travel expenses as they presently do, and thus allow the CAS to know long enough in advance of travel plans to ensure that the reimbursement could take place within the required 60-day period of time.

Mr. Dulio agreed, adding that faculty members should know by the beginning of an academic year which conferences they would be attending and when those conferences would take place, and should be able to comply with an earlier deadline.

Ms. Welling pointed out that some conferences are announced later in the year or at the last minute, making it impossible to sign up early, and so there needs to be flexibility for those circumstances.

Other ideas that were put forward were:

1) providing faculty members with airline gift cards for use for travel to conferences to get around the problem, 2) adding money to the present amount of \$1100 provided for the first trip as a way of using all the money in the pot by the end of the year, 3) reminding department chairs to remind their faculty members to make their plans early.

There was a general consensus that a solution not very different from the present method would be preferable and that it would be good to come up with something that was not too burdensome for either departments or the CAS office so that they would not have to feel like tearing their hair out.

Dean Corcoran brought the discussion to an end by noting that although this is a problem that needs to be addressed, it is a good problem because having money to distribute to faculty members for travel is a very good thing. He thanked Assembly members for their input.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dikka Berven (secretary)