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Memo

To: Faculty of Engineering Community

From: Adel Sedra

CC: Members of the Task Force on Staff Issues
Carol Truemner, Editor, Eng-e-News
Amit Chakma, Vice President Academic and Provost, University of Waterloo
Catharine Scott, Associate Provost, HR and Student Services, University of Waterloo

Date: January 9, 2006

Re: Report of the Task Force on Staff Issues
as part of the Vision 2010 Planning Exercise in the Faculty of Engineering

I am pleased to make public the final report of the Task Force on Staff Issues, which I struck early last year as part of our Vision 2010 planning exercise. I want to thank the Task Force Chair, Bill Pudifin, and the members of his task force (Lynn Crema, Prof. Tom Duever, Rick Forgett, Sue Gooding, Valerie Grieve, Bill Ott, Prof. Leo Rothenburg, Carol Smith, and Dave Walsh) for their work on behalf of all of the staff members in the Faculty of Engineering. I also want to thank all of the staff members across the Faculty who took the time to meet with or make written submissions to the task force – your input created a strong foundation upon which this report was based.

While I do not agree with every comment included in this report, I believe the resulting recommendations are sound. Overall, I am endorsing the implementation of all of the Task Force's recommendations for actions at the Faculty level, as summarized on pages four through six of the report. The only factor that may limit the Faculty's ability to act on all of the Faculty-level recommendations is the absence of an appropriate process and resource person to implement them.

To that end, I am asking Human Resources (HR) to consider implementing a more decentralized organizational structure, which would provide one staff relations co-ordinator position to be dedicated to the Faculty of Engineering. This staff person would remain an employee of the HR department, with an office in the Faculty of Engineering and a joint reporting structure to HR and the Dean of Engineering. Such a staff person could allow the Faculty to carry out many of the recommendations of this task force, and could act as an information conduit and advisor to all Faculty staff and managers. I firmly believe this step would also substantially benefit the Faculty, HR, and staff relations as a whole by creating a transparent, clear, open, and effective environment for all HR activities across the Faculty.

Specifically, some of the recommendations that I plan to implement that will require a great deal of HR guidance and expertise – ideally through a dedicated HR staff person working in Engineering – include: a Faculty-wide review of job classifications and descriptions; the development and implementation of career paths where possible; and the provision of information for conflict resolution. The active engagement of an HR professional could also improve communication and education across the Faculty on a broad range of topics related to staff relations and HR policies and procedures.

There are other recommendations on which the Faculty can act without outside guidance. I will create a staff committee that will provide me advice and feedback directly, and I will add staff representation to Engineering Faculty Council and other committees of council as appropriate. I will strike a committee that will work within Waterloo's policy framework to establish an annual staff award program at the Faculty level, and will encourage departments to do the same. Within the context of data gathered and analyzed for the Faculty plan and annual progress reports, I will ensure staff workload metrics (e.g. staff to faculty and staff to student ratios) are included.

On the other Faculty-level recommendations, I will work with department chairs and associate deans to bring about the recommended changes in their units. This includes recommendations related to: staff training and development; departmental forums for staff; starting salaries; staff stress, security, and safety; monitoring working conditions and workload; and reporting structures.

This report also makes a number of recommendations that are outside the Faculty of Engineering domain. While I agree with each of these and recommend them for implementation, any decisions and actions to be taken on them fall in the University's domain. I am therefore copying the report to the University Provost, Amit Chakma, and the University Associate Provost, Human Resources and Student Services, Catharine Scott, for their consideration. On behalf of the Faculty, I am committed to working with them on any of these recommendations where our assistance or further input would be valuable.

I note that, among the University recommendations, the report suggests UW has an annual scale increase for staff, which it does not. However, I support the intent of this recommendation, that all staff members should receive an annual increase equivalent to scale.

I very much look forward to working with my colleagues in the Faculty and within the University's central administration to bring about changes that will ensure a positive and supportive environment for all.

Adel S. Sedra