The Academic Staff Representatives to the UW System met on September 26, 2014. Below is a summary of what was discussed.

Academic Staff Reps Discussion

--University Personnel Structure. UW System administration has created the first draft of several operating policies for the University Personnel Structure (UPS). Reps at several campuses were asked by their administration to look over those policies and give feedback. While some of the policies only involve classified/university staff, other policies affect academic staff and faculty. Reps specifically discussed the operating policy TC3, “Compensation Structures and Tools”, the purpose of which is to: “outline procedures to be used when setting and adjusting salaries of UW System employees. This policy will replace the Compensation Plan for University Staff.” The draft policy can be found at http://www.uwsa.edu/personnelsystems/development-documents/ops/list/tc3.pdf

--Supplemental Pay Plans. Reps discussed the issue of supplemental pay plans for academic staff. Many campuses have involved shared governance directly in the process of planning their supplemental pay plans as internal resources make them possible.

--Decoupling of academic staff from faculty in compensation plans. Several Reps raised the concern that some campuses may begin to decouple academic staff from faculty in compensation plans. The general consensus was that employees have a stronger voice when they are united and that we should continue to couple academic staff and faculty in compensation plans.

--Academic Staff Numbers. A Rep raised the question of how many academic staff each campus has. Reps were asked to report their numbers. One Rep brought up the issue of academic staff attrition and shared numbers of academic staff resignations over the last few years. Those numbers were extremely high and need to be reviewed further to determine why academic staff are resigning.

--Review process for academic staff. UW-Madison’s Rep shared that his campus is working on a policy wherein academic staff would be reviewed after 5 years if they are at the top of their possible category of employment. This would provide structural opportunities for those staff members to earn salary adjustments. At UW-Madison, they continue to award the “distinguished” category for academic staff, which is different from most campuses; it is the distinguished staff that are being reviewed. If other campuses wanted to pursue a policy such as this, they would need to consider the issue of the distinguished prefix.

--Academic staff leadership conference. The virtual conference that was scheduled for the summer of 2014 did not occur due to the fact that speakers did not confirm their presentations before the conference. Discussion was held as to whether or not we should continue the leadership conference and if so, who should host it.

--Program prioritization exercises. Reps discussed the various exercises their campuses are undertaking to practice how they will cut budgets if the need arises. Some campuses indicated that they have not
done exercises; others have done extensive exercises with hypothetical cut levels (2%, 4%, 6%); others have used their balances to fill the gaps but are starting discussions on how the cuts will be made.

**Discussion of Academic Staff and Faculty Reps, and UW System Administrators**

--Tuition freeze (David Ward). The governor is proposing two more years of a tuition freeze. In the Biennial Budget Request, the UW System is requesting $95 million for talent development to meet the needs of the state. There are 3 types of talent: 1) Talent economy 2) Talent pathways (getting more talent into the UW System from underrepresented groups) 3) Talent infrastructure (faculty/academic staff needs). $27 million of the request will be applied to the gap created by the tuition freeze. One Rep asked if UW System should have requested a freeze in anticipation of the governor mandating it, then asked for more state resources? David Ward responded that they would like to show that college is affordable in Wisconsin and that the UW System is being more assertive about telling our story. System did not want to shoot themselves in the foot regarding funding.

--Remedial education (David Ward). Ward shared information regarding our students in need of remedial education. He asserted that if 20% of our students need remedial education, that’s too high. Dialogue with K-12 system is important. He also stated that there is a disconnect between when the ACT is taken and when placement tests are administered. English remedial numbers have doubled in the last 5 years. They are trying to improve the success rate of students in remedial education. A Rep asked how would the timing of the placement test affect remedial education issues? Ward said that there could be tools for students for self-assessment that could help them identify problem areas and correct them.

--Voter ID (Artanya Wesley). There has been concern around students having access to appropriate identification to vote in the state of Wisconsin given the new voter ID law. Wesley reported that most students already have access to an appropriate form of ID. Universities offer voter ID cards and student enrollment verification. There needs to be an expiration date within 2 years of issuance on the card. There is a website available to assist students, faculty and staff with registration and voting.

--Timing issues and shared governance (David Ward). A Rep raised the concern that sometimes UW System makes decisions regarding HR issues that do not always get faculty and staff input, as they are not on contract over the summer. Academic Affairs needs to be aware of timelines for appropriate input.

--Agenda for October Board of Regents Meeting (Ward). Second half of Inclusive Excellence Meeting; history to cover how Inclusive Excellence started. At Stevens Point, all tribal leaders have been invited to the meeting to discuss tribal educational needs (Regent Manydeeds is part of that discussion). Follow-up with 30 credit transfer agree with the Ojibwa College to see their interest

--9 over 12 month payroll issues (David Ward). There is a soft goal of completing this project by summer 2015 but there are other priorities taking precedent currently in the HR System. It is about IT time and development more than anything else. A Rep asked which other projects were taking precedent. Reps shared the concern that UW System administration has repeatedly said that this issue will be addressed
but other priorities continue to surface. Reps would like a report of why the issue has not been dealt with, as it is an extremely important priority for many faculty and staff. A Rep stated that if the issue is not going to be dealt with any time soon, System administration should be honest and tell us.

--Compensation for employees. A Rep asked what is being planned to address compensation issues system-wide aside from internally reallocating resources on individual campuses? Rep asked that the Board of Regents create a plan. A Rep shared the high numbers of academic staff resignations over the past few years; the high rates of resignations could be related to less-than-competitive salaries for academic staff.

-- University Personnel Structure operational policies (Al Crist, Human Resources). Reps raised concerns about the timeline of these updates and how these policies are changes. Crist indicated that concerns should be directed to your campus HR Director. Crist said that UPS changes largely affect classified/University staff but that some policies (e.g. TC3) include academic staff and faculty. 
http://www.uwsa.edu/personnelsystems/development-documents/ops/list/

--Reconstitution of a Compensation Advisory Committee that was disbanded in 2012. Compensation and Fringe Benefits has been a concern since creation of UW-System. The CAC was disband since 2012 - since then, changes have occurred. Reps raised the question of whether these changes necessitate reconstituting this committee. It might make sense to re-name and re-brand this committee to partner with the Board of Regents in their efforts to address this issue.

--Revisit of the Fringe Benefits Committee.

-- HRS Updates (Al Crist). They are having regular meetings every other week with the leadership team. Currently, much energy is going to resolving HR Audit issues. Staff is a continual issue with completing projects. State has policies they are trying to work with HRS but also running into other operating issues (e.g. State Statutes).

--Faculty/IAS Workload to Speaker Vos. Information went to the Speaker’s office on Thursday, October 25. David Ward has been on this project. Take home points are that: 1) they are examining information down to individual faculty member. The University needs to be more engaged with the Economy of the state and this has happened quite a bit in the past few years. As engagement increases, faculty workload is affected.

--Shared Governance Vision. A Rep asked what shared governance means to the current System administration. This will be addressed at the next meeting due to time constraints.

--Titling Study. There is not much of an “appetite” with a whole new structure. System is looking at an outside consultant to get organized. There is no RFP and no timeline for this project. It’s possible that there will be an RFP for fall semester of 2015.

--Desire 2 Learn. Reps expressed frustration over the timing of D2L updates. Some recent updates have come during extremely bad times during the semester, such as during final exam weeks on several campuses.