**State Instructor’s Advisory Council**

**Agenda**

3:00-5:00 PM – Zoom.

December 15, 2023

Call to order: **Mark Beluscak @ 3:00 PM**

Attending:
Arapahoe CC – Mark Beluscak

CCC Online – Katherine Burton

CC Aurora – Braden Neihart

CC Denver – Joy Wagner-Sepulveda

Front Range CC – Laura Wally

Lamar CC – Tammie Clark

Morgan CC – Su Wright

Otero College – Fred Boettcher

Pueblo CC – Dana Trujillo

Red Rocks CC – Jorg Friedrich

Trinidad SC – Kevin Eades

Not Attending: Pikes Peak CC – Betsy Tuma

Open Positions

Colorado Northwestern CC

Northeastern Junior College

# Opening Business

The Recorder took attendance. The SIAC amended and approved the minutes of the October meeting. SIAC amended and approved the minutes of the November meeting. Mark Beluscak then welcomed this month’s guest, Christina Cecil, who is the Chief Human Resources Officer of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS).

# Special Guest: Christina Cecil, Chief Human Resources Officer

Christina Cecil first addressed the issue of instructor health insurance benefits. She explained how health eligibility works through the concept of “contact hours” (these are not “student” contact hours). Using a “work back” measurement period (April 15 to April 14). an employee’s “contact hours” are determined by a complex calculation. Human Resources (HR) uses ACA (Affordable Care Act) Contact Hours to account for instructors who are working at multiple institutions. The Human Resource Office does not include contact hours gained over the summer as it has determined that the inclusion of those hours actually lowers the weekly contract hour rate. However, Human Resource Directors and the various community colleges have the discretion to manage anomalies in individual cases, such as someone who works more hours over the summer than the school year.

The benefit plan year runs from July 1 to June 30. All employees, including instructors, are eligible for supplemental benefits such as limited health plans and accident and hospital indemnity. These benefits are independent of contact hours and are also portable, meaning that an instructor can take those benefits if they leave CCCS.

Mark Beluscak asked Christina Cecil about the “Variable Hour Employee Operational Guide.” She explained that this is the operational guideline for human resources, and it outlines how human resources calculates contact hours. Laura Wally asked about the hourly component (timesheet positions). Christina Cecil explained that eligibility for hourly employees is determined on a 52-week schedule. Kate Burton asked how HR calculates contact hours for online instructors. Christina Cecil explained the CRN process from Academic Affairs to allow online instructors to work on multiple campuses.

Christina Cecil then addressed the topic of unemployment eligibility during the summer. She explained that neither CCCS nor the colleges determine eligibility; the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) makes the determination. Individual college manage claim cases. Once a college HR department receives a case from CDLE, that HR department sends details on that claim to CDLE. Christina Cecil also said that disputes are the only cases that go to CDLE hearings.

Laura Wally asked Christina Cecil to define the term “job attached.” Chistina Cecil stated that this term refers to courses offered to instructors in future semesters. Jorg Friedrich asked about the meaning of the term “reasonable assurance.” This term refers to the “next assignment,” such as classes offered for the spring semester before the winter break begins. She then stated that if a college has not paid an employee within a 120-day period, the system automatically terminates that employee. Christina also added that there is some pushback from the colleges on this policy because some instructors only teach one semester per school year. She then suggested that the Council reach out to CDLE for responses to some of these questions. Finally, Christina Cecil stated that although she is not familiar with the language of CDLE, she would follow up on the terms “job attached” and “reasonable assurance,” as well as following up with individual Human Resource Departments.

Mark Beluscak then asked Chistina Cecil to address a statement that Landon Pirius, the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs for CCCS, previously made to the Council that “Every HR Director at every community college will not dispute [CDLE] claims.” Christina Cecil said that the general consensus “is not to go to hearings,” but added that system leadership made this consensus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When one [instructor] files a claim at CDLE, we [CCCS] get a questionnaire. CDLE compares the [completed] questionnaire to [CCCS] monthly data reporting, and CDLE makes the determination [about the claim].” – Christina Cecil

The third issue Christina Cecil addressed was the Equal Pay Act. The first question involved the issue of whether this law affected the system as a whole or each individual college. As each college has its own budget, the Equal Pay Act affects each individual college, and each individual college has developed equal pay for its instructors. The system is looking at the challenges to provide consistent pay to all colleges throughout the system. Currently, rural college instructors work at lower rates of pay than urban college instructors. There are current discussions within the system to equalize the pay between rural and urban colleges, although there is no easy answer to this question and this issue also affects the recruitment and retention of instructors. Currently there are three paths:

* Bring the instructor pay rate to match the pay rate at the “metro average.”
* Standardize the pay for rural college instructors at a rate that is 13 percent less than the “metro average.”
* A phased approach that uses a standardized metro rate and a rural rate and then brings those two rates closer to each other over time.

There is a 21-hour credit-hour limit for an instructor in a single semester, but this is hard to enforce, as Human Resources might not catch those instructors who teach more than 21 credit-hours.

Laura Wally asked Christina Cecil about public student loan forgiveness. There is a guide on certification that involves the measurement for ACA credit hours. The challenge is keeping track of who has asked for certification.

Joy Wagner asked about the Course Prep Fee, a Spring 2023 Council proposal. She wanted to know “what are the major barriers to getting paid sooner [in the semester] for work completed on courses during the breaks.” Christina Cecil said that the system HR department needs more information from “local HR departments.”

After Christina Cecil left the meeting, the consensus within the Council was that “the colleges do dispute [unemployment] claims.” Mark Beluscak stated that “The system is very fond of saying “we are one big happy system” when it suits them in that regard, and the individual colleges have great latitude to make decisions on their behalf when it suits them.” Joy Wagner said “We are getting into a grey area. [Just] not sure if it is purposely ambiguous.” Overall, results are inconsistent on a case-by-case basis. Laura Wally said that “[we need] something that supports the instructor.” Kate Burton remarked that “there is no guarantee of courses” and that the concept of job assurance is “utterly ridiculous” and that it is more like “seasonal employment.”

# SIAC By-Law Review and Discussion

Mark Beluscak reminded the Council that its By-Laws mirror that of the State Faculty Council (SFAC) with regards to release hours (the chair of SFAC has release hours). Currently, the system charges additional hours to the “matrix.” Joy Wagner told the Council to “Take it,” especially if this could help qualification for health insurance (increased ACA contact hours). Laura Wally seconded Joy’s comments and added that “any kind of credit hours would help” achieve the thresholds needed for health care (FLAC calculations use a 45-week divisor and hourly (timesheet) calculations use a 52-week divisor). Also, Laura said that these release hours could help “institutionalize SIAC [as a group] that will pay those credits year after year to leadership.” The Council concluded that it should take the offer, whatever it is.

With regards to leadership positions, Joy Wagner suggested that the Council stagger the Chair positions as “much as you can” with a transition to Chair and Vice Chair or Chair and Chair-Elect from Co-Chairs. Staggering the terms means that operations do not change much, and that one chair may get more “release time” than the other chair. It was suggested that the Chairs hold two-year terms and the Recorder hold a one-year term. Kevin Eades concurred on the suggestion that the recorder position remain at a one-term. It was also suggested that no leadership positions be restricted by term limits.

The Council plans to finalize the by-laws at the January meeting. All members are encouraged to look at the document “SIAC By-Law CCCS Fall 2022” that is in the By-Laws folder on MS Teams.

# Updates on CO Online @

Several members of the Council attended the online summit held on December 8 that addressed the issues with Colorado Online @. The summit hosts told the attendees that “The List” of available CCCS Online instructors could not be distributed beyond HR departments because of the presence of personal information (do the College Deans have access to this document through SharePoint?). Kate Burton said that “there will be some courses that no one will have instructors for.”

Dana Trujillo suggested that SIAC create their own “list” and manage the “gap” between those looking for courses to teach and those colleges looking for instructors to teach classes. All that SIAC would need to create this list is “name, phone number, and subject.”

With regards to academic freedom and course ownership, the position of the system is that the course content belongs to the instructor outside of the discipline-required text.

The system has also given the impression that they want to standardize instructor pay across the system. According to Dana Trujillo, the system is still considering the three options mentioned by Christina Cecil earlier in the meeting. The metro colleges are working together to bring the instructor pay rate at their colleges to the “metro average.” Landon Pirius has suggested that the use of system reserves could bridge the gap. Fred Boettcher asked about the reserves and Dana Trujillo stated that Landon Pirius thought the reserves were “quite substantial.”

# SFAC Update

Dana Trujillo attended the most recent SFAC meeting that lasted 8 hours. She said that SFAC wanted to represent instructors as well as full-time faculty and that SIAC members should work with their respective SFAC members. Angie Gramse, the system’s Chief Legal Counsel, stressed the digital accessibility policy as there are “significant penalties if not followed.”[[1]](#footnote-1) SFAC also discussed faculty burnout.

Joy Wagner said that anyone can go to the Board meeting. Laura Wally proposed a revision to the system policy on shared governance to include instructors but then suggested that SIAC write their own proposal. Dana Trujillo replied that the State Board “is on draft #32 of SPNBB.”

# New Business

## Simple Syllabus Update

Dana Trujillo announced that instructors should “Be Prepared” as the system moves to utilize the Simple Syllabus software to standard syllabi across the system. The system plans to launch a test group in the Spring 2024 semester and roll out the program in the Summer 2024 semester. Dana also expressed concerns that this software could erode “academic freedom.”

Joy Wagner reassured SIAC that that Simple Syllabus works very well and there are only “certain sections that are editable “and that the software allows for a “shortened version for students to use.”

## Future Meetings

The next SIAC meeting will reconvene on January 19, 2024.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Kevin Eades, Recorder

1. In this case, “digital accessibility” refers to the assurance that faculty and instructors create digital documents so that visually impaired persons can access them. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)