

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STAFF SENATE

May 17, 2023

After reviewing the outcome of the Docking survey, several recurring themes emerged, including:

- Flexibility
- Parking
- Benefits
- Pay

We formed a subcommittee to look at ways we could address some of the concerns employees mentioned, and after finding that some of things that were mentioned as concerns were outside of WSU's ability to change (leave accrual for example – this is mandated by the State), we then tried to focus mainly on things that were within the university's power to change or improve. Note – while some of these may also be germane to faculty, our focus was solely on staff, so all numbers or estimates are only using numbers related to current staffing levels.

Flexibility – We recommend a formal policy be written and added to the policy manual relative to flexible schedules and remote work opportunities.

Since WSU has a [guidance document](#) relative to remote work and/or flexible schedules, we would recommend that a formal policy be created that provides clear expectations both of the leader and of the employee. As you may recall, hearing that there was confusion about whether the administration supported the idea of flexible, remote or hybrid work schedules, we asked President Muma to speak to this at the Town Hall in the Fall, where he clearly stated that this was something the university was in support of, and that employees should be allowed that opportunity when in positions that were conducive to remote or hybrid work, or for a flexible work schedule. If a formal policy existed, we believe that leaders would recognize that these types of arrangements are university supported and be more willing to work with employees to create a mutually agreeable work schedule.

We also know that there already is, and will likely continue to be confusion, we would encourage HR to develop a comprehensive training program for supervisors as well as employees to include expectation setting, accountability practices, and how to work together to make the culture shift to it being acceptable for employees (when able) to work remote or flexible schedules. Studies have likely been done on how to assess productivity and accountability for remote work arrangements; data from such studies could help inform the policy we might make here, as well as the training we could develop for leaders.

Given that this has become more of an expectation for new employees, and perceived as a 'perk' for current employees, this could be viewed as both a recruitment and retention tool.

Parking – We recommend utilizing free or discounted parking as a reward for recipients of Distinguished Service Awards, and for years of service.

Aside from pay, the item that comes up most often is related to having to pay to park. While we recognize that this is not uncommon in jobs in both the public and private sector, it doesn't lessen the sting of being charged, in effect, to come to work.

We have two different proposals relative to using parking as a reward – for Distinguished Service Award winners and for years of service. These would be recurring, yearly costs. It would be preferable that if these were implemented, that they would go into effect for all past and present and future award recipients currently employed at WSU, and those with the years of service indicated.

Distinguished Service Award

- Staff senate recognizes 5 staff members annually for Distinguished Service awards.
 - We propose that the recipients of those awards receive free parking on campus for one year – but our preference would be that it be for the remainder of their career at WSU.
 - At the highest cost rate – (\$156 per year) that would be a cost of \$780 for one year for the award recipients.
 - Consider making this a “life-time benefit” – meaning recipients would never have to pay for parking again. If we look at the past 14 years, we have 45 out of 70 awardees who are still with the university. Even if all 70 were still here, if we continued to give them free parking for the duration of their employment, that would be around \$11,000 per year.
 - If recipients prefer to have a reserved parking space – reduce the cost of their reserved space by the parking rate that would be their benefit if they were receiving the free parking (rate based on their salary). For example, an employee making \$65,000 per year would be charged \$130 per year for parking. Under this plan, they would only have to pay \$520 per year for a reserved parking space. ($\$650 - \$130 = \$520$)
 - OR consider providing a free reserved parking space for either one year OR (preferably) the remainder of the recipient's career at WSU.
 - Cost for one year for five recipients: \$3,250
 - Cost if the 70 mentioned above were still here per year: \$45,500
- Doing something like this would be meaningful to the recipient and help with retention. If these employees are some of our best performers, we should do what we can to retain them!

Years of Service Recognition

- A recurring concern from staff was that there seems to be little appreciation/reward for those who choose to stay at WSU. Pay is not increased regularly, bonuses for longevity are a thing of the past, and overall, the reward for longevity is lacking. For example - currently staff who achieve 5 – 20 years of service (in 5 year increments) are given \$20 to use at the Bookstore and staff with 25+ years of service receive \$40 to use at the Bookstore. While staff are always appreciative of any reward, it has been pointed out that there's only so much WSU-themed gear a person can use. We therefore want to offer the following recommendation.
 - Recommend that parking fees be reduced/eliminated as a reward for longevity.
 - 5 years of service – reduce parking cost by one-quarter
 - 10 years of service – reduce parking cost by half
 - 15 years of service – reduce parking cost by three-quarters
 - 20+ years of service – parking is free
 - Benders of Twigs – free reserved space
 - We asked HR for staff numbers broken down by number of years they have been at WSU. At the time that the data was pulled, we had 1855 staff members. Of that amount, 1135 were here five or fewer years, reflecting, in part, the turnover rate. Here is a cost breakdown if we were to provide discounts as mentioned above, assuming all were being assessed at the highest rate. The formula used below is number of employees in each years of service category, multiplied by the discounted amount – which was calculated by multiplying the highest rate (\$156) by the amount of the discount.
 - 5 years of service – $299 \times \$39 = \$11,661$
 - 10 years of service – $156 \times \$78 = \$12,168$
 - 15 years of service – $106 \times \$117 = \$12,402$
 - 20 years of service – $68 \times \$156 = \$10,608$
 - Benders – $91 \times 650 = \$59,150$ (technically the only “loss” is the amount these 91 would have paid for parking - \$14,196)
 - This totals \$61,035 in “lost” parking revenue
 - If employees receiving these discounts (5 – 24 years of service) are interested in a reserved space, we'd suggest using a formula similar to the one mentioned in the previous section – subtract the discount that they would have received for their regular parking space from what they would have to pay for the reserved parking space.
 - Employees who have received both a Distinguished Service Award and specific years of service should be allowed to choose which parking benefit they wish – but we should default to whatever offers the employee the highest benefit.

Benefits – Tuition Assistance - we recommend that the university cover the entire cost of tuition and fees, up to 7 hours for undergraduate coursework and up to 6 hours of graduate coursework per semester.

Currently employees receiving tuition assistance are required to pay all course/college fees – which can add up quickly depending upon which colleges the student and/or the course(s) they may be enrolling in. We asked for data from OPA on how much WSU employees who received tuition assistance for AY2022 had to pay out of pocket – which is shown in the table below.

Semester	Out of pocket	Non-employee waiver or scholarship*	WSU employee scholarship or waiver**	Total
Fall 2021	\$ 52,147	\$ 58,150	\$220,746	\$331,044
Spring 2022	\$ 50,667	\$ 78,413	\$243,852	\$372,932
Summer 2022	\$ 7,064	\$ 29,232	\$ 94,114	\$130,410
	\$109,878	\$165,795	\$558,712	\$834,386

*external scholarship or waiver specific to the student

**includes the tuition waiver as well as the student support fee waiver

As you can see, about \$110,000 was paid by our employees. We asked OPA to leave in financial aid in the form of student loans, as that is ultimately an expense to the student as they will have to pay that back at some point.

David Miller indicated that the budget for the Employee Dependent Scholarships and the Staff Training and Development Scholarships (despite name, used solely for staff tuition scholarships) totals \$1,084,000 (\$450,000 for dependent scholarships, \$634,000 for staff scholarships) and that those two scholarship funds can be used interchangeably.

Using the above figures for AY2022 (chosen because it had a higher usage rate than past AY figures), the cost to pay for the full tuition and fees would be \$668,590 (\$34,590 over the current tuition scholarship budget) – leaving \$415,410 in the dependent scholarship budget if no additional funds are allocated to these budget lines. Note – we did not collect data on the dependent scholarship usage for this proposal. However, David did mention that we have not maxed out on these accounts since additional funds were added a few years ago. We do recognize that increasing the amount that we cover could potentially decrease the amount of staff who can receive the awards, and that tuition/fee increases will further increase the outlay, but would recommend that be taken into consideration and the budget for the tuition scholarships be increased as needed to support our staff.

We therefore recommend that the university consider a change to the Tuition Assistance program to cover the full tuition AND fees, up to 7 credit hours for Undergraduate students and up to 6 credit hours for Graduate students. This could have the potential to both improve staff retention and increase the student headcount/credit hour production at WSU.

Pay – We support the university’s efforts to bring staff salaries up to levels that are indicated by the market and to continue to make adjustments on a yearly review cycle. We will continue to advocate for this being a high priority for the administration, to help recruit and retain quality employees. Aside from pay, there has been much discussion about the lack of a merit-based pay system and that there is no systematic reward for exceeding performance expectations. We therefore have the following recommendations:

- Until such a time that we can have an actual merit-based pay system in place, we recommend that the university offer a monetary bonus (not base salary increase) each year for staff who receive ratings above Meets Expectations. Because there is no data readily available on how many staff have these ratings, we cannot provide a clear cost estimate.
 - Exceeds Expectations – 1% of annual salary
 - Exceptional – 2% of annual salary
- We recommend providing some type of bonus for completing a degree while working at the university, whether it is required for the job the employee currently holds or not. While we recognize that there is some expectation that a degree might open up higher level opportunities, and thus the employee may move on to other positions inside or outside the university, that doesn’t always happen. As such, we believe that staff should be rewarded for bettering themselves. In some institutions, an automatic 1% pay increase is given when an employee receives a degree (within specific parameters, of course). Information was provided to HR earlier this semester about a program at [Florida State College at Jacksonville](#), that allowed employees to request a 1% salary increase every three years if they completed a specific number of hours of professional development and/or academic coursework. HR is currently working on a professional development plan so could use that as a guideline. Some schools don’t use central funding pools to provide bonuses. [As an example, George Mason University has a program that allows departments to provide these bonuses at their discretion, within established parameters.](#)

Our recommendation would be that any pay adjustments or bonuses be funded through a central pool of money so we don’t run into the problem of the haves and have-nots that we often hear of as a reason departments with funding are unable to provide raises to their staff even when they have the funding to do so. And that this be budgeted for regularly and the funding for these bonuses/pay adjustments not be cut from areas that would otherwise benefit employees at WSU. Funding for this could be handled in the same way the university budgets for T&P and PIR for faculty.

Other Suggestions

- In future negotiations with dining service vendors, require that WSU employees (with ID card) receive a discount on all purchases.
- Consider providing all staff with a Shocker Dollar balance on a yearly basis, set up in such a way that the U only has to pay anything if the Shocker Dollars are actually used.