Re: Staff culture & climate survey 2018  
Date: 4 November 2019

Colleagues and Coworkers of the CHS Community,

In April of this year, Staff Council administered the first ever staff culture and climate survey, assessing the thoughts and perceptions of classified staff & university and academic professionals. The responses we received demonstrated the passion and engagement of staff across the College of Humanities and Sciences. Council is incredibly encouraged by the willingness of our colleagues to be the drivers behind meaningful change in CHS toward making our academic and administrative units great places to work.

With the report on our culture and climate survey (found on the same web page as this letter), Council submitted the following recommendations to Interim Dean Don Young to address areas of concern. We look forward to collaborating with the Office of the Dean to enact them.

Role Changes, Responsibility Additions and Overloads  
Council believes that the large proportion of responsibility additions without compensation, overloads due to staff vacancies and unattended vacancies in the College (see “vacancies and staffing”) may be due to issues related to understanding or implementing CHS policies that surround how such events are handled. Council wishes to work with CHS human resources to post such policies and related guidance to the CHS intranet (intranet.chs.vcu.edu) to improve overall transparency.

Promotions in Place  
Based on confidential free responses related to the “vacancies and staffing” section of the survey, Council has also recommended a CHS policy which implements promotion in place procedures which are equitable to faculty promotion guidelines. Council recognizes the complicated nature of this recommendation and so considers it to be a more long-term project for the College of Humanities and Sciences.

Fiscal Resources  
In deference to the university’s support of and mandate for individual career development, and to address concerns in confidential free responses in the “governance and professional development” section, Council recommends a policy which guarantees equal access to professional development resources – fiscal and otherwise – to both faculty and staff.

Spot Awards and Exceptional Recognition Awards  
Council seeks to address under-utilization of spot awards and achievement awards in units by communicating their utility and availability directly to unit heads at regular intervals.
Unit Atmosphere toward Staff
Staff Council recognizes its role as a major representative of all staff in the College of Humanities and Sciences. We believe that this representation extends to the appropriate handling of conflict and workplace management within CHS units when reports of such instances are provided to us. To that end, and with respect to responses in the “unit atmosphere” section, Council will work with the Office of the Dean to delineate the specific role or roles of Staff Council in workplace mediation and conflict management.

Human Resources Workload and Efficiency
In acknowledgement of the overwhelming and varied response to HR-related prompts throughout the survey, Council recommends a strategic restructuring of CHS human resources operations and employee relations aimed at widening administrative bottlenecks, alleviating undue workloads on individuals, implementing CHS-specific workflows and forms for staff actions, and better demonstrating support and advocacy for staff throughout the college.

Council makes no criticism of the quality and volume of work executed by the director of HR operations for CHS and found no evidence of any such criticism in the results of the survey. To the contrary, Staff Council acknowledges the passion and dedication that is evident in Danielle Hairston’s work.

Representative Name of Staff Council
In response to evident confusion regarding the scope of Staff Council based on confidential free responses – namely, the inclusion of university and academic professionals as members of Council’s constituency – Staff Council plans to undergo a change in name to better communicate the nature of its representatives to the VCU community. The precise change will be agreed upon by Council at a later date.

Communication of Council Activities
Staff Council will keep the CHS director of communications apprised of its activities and initiatives for the purpose of more comprehensive communication with its constituents.

Staff Council wholeheartedly appreciates the feedback from staff throughout the College of Humanities and Sciences on these important issues. We also invite members of the CHS community to provide additional feedback at any time.

We would also like to remind all classified staff & university and academic professionals that Staff Council’s regular meetings are open to you without prior invitation. Please see the Staff Council page on the CHS intranet for our regular meeting times and locations.

Respectfully, and on behalf of Staff Council,

Will Moran