

Community Conversations

A CSAC subcommittee, formed in November 1999 to address the issue of communication at UNCA, conducted a series of four "Community Conversations." Approximately 65 staff and faculty members participated. Participants met in small groups and generated statements relating to perceptions of what makes UNCA a good place to work and what needs to be done to improve problem areas.

The following summary statement and six recommendations were submitted to Chancellor Mullen, accompanied by supporting comments from process participants.

Statement

Communications at UNCA would improve if each of us (staff, administrators and faculty) would commit to behaving respectfully, practicing the politics of inclusion and trusting each other. The UNCA community becomes stronger and more cohesive when each of us takes responsibility to be respectful, cooperative and communicative, regardless of our role. We encourage inclusion in decision-making and collaboration in accomplishing our mission. By honoring each person's strengths and vulnerabilities, we will invigorate our campus.

Recommendations

1. Promote respect among employees by recognizing the unique value of each employee and our interdependence.
2. Develop ways for all UNCA employees to become more informed about the whole picture on campus, such as providing information related to long-range issues.

3. Create opportunities for all employees to communicate with the Chancellor.
4. Institute a campus-wide management style that is more horizontal than vertical. Educate administrators, supervisors and directors on decision-making processes, which include listening and input from those who will be affected by decisions.

5. Encourage employees to interact with students.
6. Heighten awareness that retention of nonteaching employees is as important as retention of the faculty.

Some of these recommendations were included in the mandatory supervisory training sessions held in March.

Parking Fees

In response to a request that a staff representative be named to the Student Fees Committee, CSAC asked Nancy Williams to serve. Bryan Sinclair represents the faculty. Through her service on the committee, Nancy learned the following:

- 1) This committee sets student parking fees. Employee parking fees traditionally have been the same as student parking fees at UNCA. There are **no** campuses (of the 16 UNC campuses) where employee parking fees are less than student parking fees.
- 2) The Student Fees Committee does not make a recommendation about employee parking fees; however, because the employee parking fees have been the same as student fees, this committee did discuss employee parking fees on a limited basis.
- 3) Nancy initially recommended that the parking fee be reduced for next year; however, after seeing a

report indicating that the UNCA Master Plan includes the building of more parking decks, the committee decided reducing fees was not feasible. In fact, Arthur Foley said parking fees would need to increase at some point soon. Either there will need to be incremental increases over the next several years or a substantial increase at once several years from now. Nancy asked that the fees be held with no increase for this year to allow CSAC to get information from faculty and staff as to whether they prefer a annual increase in the years to come or a larger increase at once. The committee agreed to recommend no increase in student parking fees for this year.

Editor's Note: As of April 26, student parking fees were approved at \$70 per year, which is the same as the 1999–2000 rates. Faculty/staff usually pay the same fee. There has been no official word on how the payroll deduction option will work.)

CSAC Needs Your Help

Staff issues and concerns are the reason CSAC exists. If you have a university-wide issue or know of someone else who has a university-wide issue that should be addressed, please let one of the representatives know the details. It then becomes the responsibility of CSAC to research the issue, determine the course of action, report to you on the results of the research and present this information to the proper decision-makers. Some of the issues that have been addressed or are continuing to be addressed are staff holidays, annual leave, in-range salary policy, communications, summer picnic, student scholarships, staff training, career paths, loss of HMO, etc. No issue is too large or too small. We have found in the past that some issues are not within UNCA's control. To communicate an issue to CSAC, send one of the representatives a note, e-mail or voice-mail, and let us know your concerns. You can get a list of representatives at the following website:
<http://www.unca.edu/csac/>



UNCA
Faculty/Staff
Summer Picnic

**"FLAMINGO
FEST"**

Friday
July 28, 2000
11:30 a.m.
until the party
fizzles out!

Travel and Mileage Reimbursements

CSAC received a question from an anonymous employee regarding use of personal vehicles when we have to travel on university business. The letter (and the reaction of CSAC members when the policy was discussed) made it obvious that there are some misconceptions about travel reimbursements and using your own car for travel.

UNCA currently reimburses at the rate of 25 cents per mile if you use your vehicle for university business. An informal survey of other UNC campuses indicates that all of the other universities in the state system reimburse at the rate of 32.5 cents per mile when no state vehicle is available. Several of the campuses pay different rates based on the length of the trip.

The *State Budget Manual* (located at http://www.osbm.state.nc.us/osbm/pdf_files/complete.pdf), Section 5, pages 7 – 8, states:

"The business standard mileage rate set by the Internal Revenue Service (currently set at 31 cents per mile, but it will be raised to 32.5 cents per mile effective January 1, 2000) will be paid. . . . When it is in the best interest of the state to do so and/or because of budgetary considerations, state agencies may reimburse travelers at a rate lower than those allowed by the rules and regulations as herein stated in the *State Budget Manual*. Also, if a state employee's position qualifies him or her for a permanently assigned state vehicle and the employee chooses to drive his or her personal vehicle, then the agency can reimburse the employee at the motor Pool rate (23 cents) not the IRS rate."

This statement is the basis for the lower rate at UNCA.

Travel allowances come from existing operating budgets; the university is **not** reimbursed by the state for travel expenses for employees. However, the decision to pay at the lower rate was an on-campus decision and stemmed

from the interpretation that by paying at a lower rate, the individual would need to choose between a state vehicle, rental vehicle or personal vehicle. If UNCA had decided to pay a rate higher than 25 cents per mile, the 'personal vehicle' option would be eliminated, and the individual would be required to verify that no state vehicle or rental vehicle was available at the time of the trip in order to use a personal vehicle.

If a state vehicle is not available for travel, the State of North Carolina has agreements with several car rental companies, including Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise and others. (A list is available at www.doa.state.nc.us/PandC/975a.htm) Because of insurance and other issues, it is a good idea to obtain a car through one of these rental agencies instead of using your own car. For example, the state automobile insurance is not in effect if you use your own car and you have an accident.

From the Editor

If you have an issue or a problem and you think CSAC could help research that issue, we'd like to know. However, if you send an anonymous letter, we can't get back to you and let you know what we learned, and it's not always possible to deal with an issue through the newsletter. CSAC members are actively working to make UNCA a better place to work — a place where employee suggestions are encouraged, where communication is encouraged and supported, where there are few secrets and where we all feel safe to ask questions. If you don't want to put your question in writing and sign your name, find a member of CSAC you trust, and ask them to bring it before CSAC. We're here to help, if we can. (And we're blessed with people who like to poke around and ask questions.)