

To Classified Employees and the K-State community:

On December 07, 2012, the Alternative Service Committee traveled to the University of Kansas to meet with a panel of University Support Staff (USS) that played a key role in bringing the USS option to KU. Current members of KU USS Senate leadership joined the discussion as well. This was a unique opportunity to ask KU USS about the transition from civil service and what that change has meant to them. During the four hour discussion, Kansas State University ASC members were given the opportunity to ask about USS: positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen. ASC members in attendance felt it was a highly informative discussion that discredited some myths and hearsay about the USS option. It was interesting to have the opportunity to speak with members of the original task force, some of whom came out of retirement for this session.

ASC discussed the challenges KU faced when they initially proposed leaving the civil service system and how USS has affected their campus since its implementation seven years ago. We have summarized the visit in two parts: Part I deals with compensation and related topics and Part II deals with employment safeguards and related topics. This communication includes Part I summary.

PART I SUMMARY

Decision making issues that lead KU to develop the USS option:

- Dennis Constance spoke of the great frustration he felt, for years, going to the State Capitol to make the case to legislators for better salaries for the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) civil service employees.
- USS leadership felt very strongly that they stood a better chance negotiating salary decisions with KU administration than with Kansas legislators.
- “Do you trust Kansas legislators more or your university administrators? Who would you have more influence with?” These are questions Dennis Constance indicated the move from civil service came down to for KU.
- “The university will always experience change. However, you cannot control the change under civil service. You can, to some degree, control change under a University Support Staff model” -Ola Faucher

Compensation Issues

KU adopted a pay band model, reducing the number of classifications. USS are now moved within the pay bands to recognize increased job duties and experience level instead of reclassifying the entire position, which is a misuse of the civil service system. Many USS in attendance mentioned this was a significant improvement over the civil service classification model. Ola Faucher said it best when she said, “There is no flexibility for the university in the iron-clad civil service system.” K.S.A. 76-715a clearly states, “Implementation of this section shall not cause a salary reduction or layoff of any classified employee.” To do so would be breaking Kansas law. KU currently uses a compensation model of 2/3 across the board raise for all USS and 1/3 for merit.

Longevity Bonus Information

KU funds all longevity bonuses for USS at \$50 per every 10 to 25 years of service. The State of Kansas currently mandates each university inside state civil service to fund longevity at \$40 per every 10 to 25 years of service. KU moved longevity bonuses to base pay for yearly increase calculation purposes; however, USS still receives their annual bonus as a lump sum payment on their anniversary date. If KU approves a 1% COLA, the base salary they use to calculate that increase includes the bonus. Currently, classified employee bonuses are not included in base pay and must be decided by the Kansas Legislature every year. Last year's legislature decided to reduce our bonus from \$50/yr. to \$40/yr. As required by law, classification and compensation which includes longevity, would be subject to input by affected classified employees if there were a move to USS.

KPERS Retirement

No benefits are impacted by moving to a USS system, including KPERS. K.S.A. specifically states, "Those classified staff employees whose positions are converted from classified to unclassified status shall retain all health and flexible benefits and leave and retirement benefits provided to them under the state classified employee system." KU USS *were not* given the option to move out of KPERS. All KU USS are still members of KPERS. To be clear, KU USS *were not* given an option to move to the Regents Mandated Retirement Plan (aka TIAA/CREF). All retirement and health benefits would remain the same and cannot be changed according to Kansas law.

USS vs. Unclassified Staff Yearly Contracts

This is another area where there are pervasive rumors and hearsay. KU USS has never been issued yearly contracts. USS are on permanent appointments. Only KU's unclassified staff are issued annual contracts. To be very clear, KU's USS are not unclassified staff. They are recognized as unclassified staff in the State of Kansas Workforce Report only because there is no other category to list them under. KU USS are not classified employees, so they are listed as unclassified staff for personnel reporting purposes by the State of Kansas Department of Administration to the Kansas Legislature. If you see wording indicating otherwise (including parts of K.S.A. 76-715a), it is not an accurate picture of KU's USS appointments.

If you have any questions regarding this KU trip summary information, feel free to contact any ASC member, <http://www.k-state.edu/altservcomm/committee.html>.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alternative Service Committee