

Staff Concerns – August 2014

Comment/Concern: Wondering about the availability of parking spots where electric vehicles could charge. With them becoming more popular (Volt, Prius plug-in, etc.) there are lots of companies who are putting charging stations in for employees.

Action: Via e-mail, Chief Matt Sparks stated:
“The only parking spots I am aware of that would have electric nearby are the reserved spaces under Reed Hall. This is the first time anyone has asked that I am aware of so I don’t believe it has been an issue yet.”

At the September Staff Congress meeting, Beth Patrick explained that the aforementioned spots are for University-owned electric vehicles, and whoever raised the question could get in touch with Chief Sparks about the feasibility/allowability of using one of these. At the same time, Staff Congress members noted that allowing this would essentially cost the institution money.

Comment/Concern: I am a full-time employee with MSU and I recently inquired about my wife utilizing my tuition waiver as a dependent to continue her education. She has really become interested in teaching and has developed a passion for wanting to have a positive impact on young lives, in large part to the recent birth of our daughter, Ava. I am currently utilizing my tuition waiver to complete the Masters of Arts in Communication Program, and my wife was wanting to know if she could use some of my eligible credit hours under the tuition waiver to complete the MAT program.

When I looked into the deadline for tuition waivers, Jeffrey Liles informed me that the decision was made by MSU two years ago to not allow employee dependents to utilize the tuition waiver to complete graduate courses. I was told that the Staff Congress was asking for questions and concerns and to forward on this email so Congress knows “how many employees feel this would be a benefit worth offering.”

In addition to the correspondence in the email below, I also wanted to add the following statement.

I had to inform my wife that she was not eligible for a tuition waiver to complete graduate courses and, for lack of better words, it crushed her. She really wants to complete this program and use her intelligence, kindness, skills and talents to make an impact in the Kentucky

educational system. For her to be robbed of this opportunity due to a recent stipulation citing budgetary reasons might make “cents,” but it doesn’t make sense.

I believe that I am not alone in my disagreement with this decision. I have spoken to fellow colleagues about this and they said there was quite an uproar about it within the campus community and the MSU workforce when it happened. Paying for the dependents of employees to complete graduate courses and further their education isn’t an unnecessary expense, it’s a worthwhile investment. People like my wife may be stuck in jobs they don’t like doing work that lacks fulfillment, and having access to cost-free, post-graduate education at MSU would allow countless family members of employees to not only pursue fields they are passionate about, but also contribute to the continuing economic development and growth of Eastern Kentucky and the Commonwealth, which is a large part of MSU’s overall mission.

I strongly urge Staff Congress to reconsider this decision. Even with the extra cost, the chance for this university to continue to offer opportunities to people like my wife to succeed and make a meaningful impact to the people of Kentucky — both young and old — is invaluable. I thank you for taking my comments and concerns into consideration and I would love to discuss this issue with you further if necessary.

Action:

Staff Congress contacted HR Director Phillip Gniot, who replied:

“I certainly understand [the] concern about tuition assistance for dependent graduate courses but the university looked at this recently in light of several factors. The objective question was where do we put our limited benefit dollars to the best use? To this point we have placed the emphasis on the development of our employees so undergrad and grad tuition assistance is provided here. Of course we do offer dependent tuition assistance for undergrad courses as a means of encouraging and assisting dependents and spouses to obtain an undergraduate degree. Masters programs tend to be more specialized such as education or nursing and are often covered by an employer as an employee benefit.

We have seen some dramatic increases in benefit costs and we work very hard to control these where we can. Recent cost increases to the University’s retirement programs have been huge and are not in our control yet we must deal with these. We have an excellent record of controlling health care costs but these also continue to rise and we have made substantial improvements to our compensation plans at a substantial cost to the University.

We also compare our benefits to other employers and other Kentucky Public universities. I don't think any local employers offer dependent tuition assistance and six of the eight Kentucky public universities do not offer dependent graduate tuition assistance. The two that offer this benefit to spouses do so on a very limited basis.

I know this is probably not the answer [you] wanted to hear but it is the basis for the decision not to offer graduate tuition assistance to spouses or dependents mainly because we need to put our benefit dollars to use in other benefit areas.”

Comment/Concern: I would like to see Convocation either streamed live for those employees who cannot attend in person due to health reasons, disabilities, or because they are 'minimally staffing' their offices. If Convocation could not be streamed live, is there any chance employees could be provided a link to view at a later date? I was unable to attend Convocation last week and I'm hearing comments that were made and I would like to know the correct context in which they were given during the President's speech.

Action: Via e-mail, CFO/VP for Administration Beth Patrick stated:

“I can ask at Cabinet meeting next week to see if this is something that could be done in the future. I don't believe we recorded the convocation this year but perhaps his remarks could be posted on the website. I can check on that and we can consider a live stream in the future. I'll get back to you. Cabinet meets on Tuesday but if I can get an answer prior, I'll try to do so before the next meeting.”

At the September Staff Congress Meeting, Beth Patrick also stated that the University keeps a transcribed copy of Convocation available at the library.

Comment/Concern: A staff member recently inquired with a Staff Congress Representative about a \$5 charge for temporary parking tags for faculty and staff, and whether this was a new policy, as they previously had never been charged for such a tag in the event they forgot theirs when commuting to work.

Action: Via e-mail, Administrative Support Supervisor for the MSU Police Department Lacey Howard stated:

“I’m not sure how long it has been a policy/regulation but it and all others can be found at www.moreheadstate.edu/parking/. I know it is a policy that has been in effect for several years now but for some reason, was not enforced by the person(s) previously in my position. Below is the policy, copied directly from the website:

Temporary & guest passes

Free guest permits are available 24 hours a day at the University Police Department for persons visiting campus. Persons attending special University sponsored institutes or seminars must obtain a visitor pass from the University Police. University sponsors of such groups can make advanced parking arrangements through the University Police Traffic Office. **Visitor parking permits may not be distributed to Students, Faculty or Staff, for use.** Any Student, Faculty or Staff member caught using a visitor permit will be charged with fraudulent use of decal, which carries a very strict penalty of loss of parking privileges, Impoundment fee, ticket fee and Fraudulent decal fee.

Students or faculty and staff who require temporary registration of a vehicle may purchase a temporary permit at the rate of \$5 per week.

Student, faculty, and staff temporary registrations may not exceed two (2) weeks per semester unless specifically approved by the Chief of Police.

I took over this position at the end of June and once in this office, I went back through the policies/regulations to make sure that parking was strictly enforced the correct way from here on out. I take any job that I take on, very seriously. From what I can tell, in the past, things were not necessarily done according to policy and with parking being such a big issue, I plan on doing my best to fix that. If you have any other questions or concerns about anything, feel free to let me know and I’ll help anyway I can. Hope this helps and have a wonderful evening!”
