

CEER (Certificated Employee Employer Relations)

Minutes – March 8, 2021 11:00am – 1:00pm

Members present: Ghada Al-Masri, Vy Le, Katherine Michel, Jeff O’Connell, Rob Smedfjeld, Shairon Zingsheim

Special guests present: Sandy Bennett, Elizabeth Blau, Melissa Cervantes, Shelly Spratt

1. Introductions: After everyone introduced themselves, Rob gave a brief overview of how CEER fits into the UFO, and what its primary responsibilities have been historically. One main point was that CEER is not a negotiating body in itself, but that there are times that CEER has done some preliminary work that could then get handed off to negotiations.
2. “Civility”: From there, the group moved into an open exchange of ideas and perspectives on the primary purpose of this meeting, currently referred to as “civility”. Throughout the dialogue, it was mentioned that there was not a common understanding of what this word means, and that some interpretations and definitions could be viewed negatively. “Mindful communication” and “cultivating a positive, respectful working environment” were two suggestions of alternative ways to reference this topic.

Other ideas and perspectives included:

- a. Exploring behavior and interactions includes not just tone, but the words and actions themselves. Written interactions are important to consider too, as is body language and other non-verbal methods of communication.
- b. Varying expectations and power dynamics affect communications.
- c. It might be best to lean toward principles and guidelines instead of rules.
- d. Importance of training: about giving and receiving feedback, about trust and interactions (Franklin Covey training + resources), about mediation (listening for what has meaning on the other side).
- e. Alternative to mandatory training could be something like the Lytton Center’s book group with facilitated discussions about antiracism.
- f. Starting by “preaching to the choir” can provide other people with examples of alternative choices that ultimately lead to a culture shift.
- g. Other suggestions going forward included reintroducing “the art of small talk” and providing a resource group for people when they feel wronged.

Tasks before next meeting: Give more thought to ideas overall, search for work being done at other institutions, explore books or other resources that might be good focal points of discussion

Rob will try to accommodate everyone’s schedules in finding the next meeting time.