MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY
Staff Senate 2009-2010

Staff Senate Minutes
Wednesday, February 10, 2010  2:30 PM, Plaster Hall, #306

Members Present: Josh Doak, Gary Edwards, Mike Fox, Darren Fullerton, Erik Hilgendorf, Greg Killingsworth, Greg Needham, Ann Quade, Olive Talley, and Debbie Woodmansee.

Member(s) Absent / Excused: Ted Wright

Determination of Quorum: Ten of eleven members present; quorum established.

Call to Order: Following the mixer, Darren Fullerton called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM.

Approval of Minutes: Darren called for changes in the minutes; there being none called for a motion to approve; Josh Doak motioned and Ann Quade made the second; motion carried and the minutes from the January 13, 2010 minutes approved as written

Administrative Comments: Upon opening the floor, Darren welcomed guests and thanked them for attending the mixer. There were fifteen staff members from Plaster Hall in attendance.

A. Darren introduced Dr. Mark Parson, Vice President of Development, and Executive Director MSSU Foundation. Dr. Parson gave an overview of his responsibilities. He explained the importance of private philanthropy, major gifts, and long range development. Dr. John Tiede will be retiring in March 2010. JoAnn Hollis-Graffam and Michael Fontana have been hired as Development Officers. They will raise funds through the Missouri Southern Foundation for MSSU. Dr. Parson stated that the Staff Senate can help in fund raising efforts by encouraging participation in giving. He explained that when the Foundation submits grant applications, one of the priority specifications is the percentage of employee participation. He stressed that it is not the amount of money collected that is emphasized, but the level of interest in the financial welfare of the institution demonstrated by the number of employees who invest in it. When asked what the ratio of employee involvement is currently, he stated that MSSU falls short of 25%. The Foundation goal for 2010 is to reach 25%. He stated that the participation rate among employees provides significant leverage when applying for federal grant monies. He stressed the point that it is the level of participation, not the level of giving that is important and that no gift is too small to be counted as participation.

Dr. Parson expressed appreciation for the solid footing laid by Dr. John Teide and (the late) Curt Betebenner. He stated that he and his staff are looking forward growing on that foundation.
A senator asked if Dr. Parson was only responsible for Foundation dollars. Dr. Parson explained that a consultant assisted MSSU modeling a similar structure to other universities whereby the office is divided: 1) Vice President of Development—reporting to the BOG; and 2) Executive Director of Foundation Advancement-reporting to the MSSU Board of University Development.

B. Darren introduced Rob Yust, Interim Vice President of Business Affairs. Mr. Yust presented an extensive overview of the MSSU finances. He projected the disclaimer that the budget is a “hot topic” and cited several points that Dr. Speck (MSSU President) highlighted points from the State Commissioner’s letter at the Listening Meeting, held Friday, February 5, 2010. Budget management strategies for Missouri higher education suggested by the commissioner include: close campuses, combine some campuses, and privatize. Rob stated that these are all possibilities; a conclusion drawn on his some seventeen years experience at Southern.

Mr. Yust noted that with all the negative news, he is happy to announce that MSSU will close FY10 in what he stated as, “fairly good shape”. MSSU will begin FY11 with better cash than in the past several years, however, all higher education institutions will face deep cuts in state funding. He explained that we can expect the state to reduce funding for MSSU from 5.2% to 7% which could result in as much as a 1.7 to 8 million dollar reduction in funds.

Mr. Yust stated that it will be up to MSSU to recoup the losses in funding; either through raising revenues and/or cost cutting mechanisms. Senate Bill 389 mandates that fees that reach across the board cannot be raised; IE tuition, student fees. Select groups can be targeted for increases, but those maneuvers must be carefully scrutinized for possible negative impact. We could raise out of state tuition, but would likely lose students therefore negating the raise. Studies have been ongoing to assist in the determination of what strategies will or will not work. Areas of possible revenues gains such as textbook rental fees. FY11 will help MSSU prepare for the predicted losses in FY12 which will end at the level observed in FY07. Mr. Yust stated that speculation beyond FY12 is frightening in light of recent appropriation trends.

A senator asked if recruitment and retention of additional students would make a significant improvement in revenue. Mr. Yust replied that student population increases always have a positive impact, however, when planning budget strategies the institution cannot plan for the increase and budget for anticipated increases in tuition funds.

A senator inquired if the state schools are likely to lobby to repeal Senate Bill 389. Mr. Yust explained that the bill has too many tentacles to focus directly on the portion of the bill that affects tuition increases. He stated that the bill does not say the institutions cannot raise tuition, it simply makes the provision that if tuition is raised, the state would reduce appropriations.

A senator asked how money is specified for capital improvements and if that is tied to tuition. Mr. Yust replied that it is all part of one. Revenues received determine how the budget is divided institutionally, including capital improvements.

Jeff Gibson, Interim Assistant Vice President for Business Affairs accompanied Mr. Yust to answer specific questions that might arise that are specific to his area of expertise. Addressing the question regarding out of state tuition, Mr. Gibson noted that scholarship awards and financial aid both operate under caps. He stated that Kathy Feith, Director of Financial Aid, has been diligent in watching the caps and to date MSSU is compliant.

The question of partnering with other institutions, like Crowder Community College, was posed. Mr. Yust stated that MSSU invites partnership with Crowder. MSSU is currently exploring
placing satellite offices in Neosho and other locations to utilize Distance Learning via ITV. Crowder CC is currently the #1 feeder for transfer students.

A senator mentioned an interview that Mr. Anderson, President, MSSU Board of Governors in which he alluded to the fact that with the increase in enrollment, we could expect a pay increase in 2011. Rob replied that an actual pay raise is doubtful because, as Dr. Speck stated at his Listening Meeting, any raises need to be sustainable in subsequent years. As mentioned earlier, we can’t predict enrollment therefore we don’t budget for it. However, the administration is exploring other one-time methods of nominal compensation to employees. Mr. Gibson interjected that there is strong sensitivity to increases. It is perceived that the institution might be able to endure further cuts in appropriations. Discussion ensued regarding possible benefits ramifications and tax issues for employees.

Darren thanked the administrative guests for taking time to attend the Staff Senate Meeting and excused them to attend another commitment. Mr. Yust invited anyone who might have additional questions to email him.

Committee Reports:
A. Sick Leave Policy Committee – The Faculty Welfare Committee will present the initiative at the next meeting of the Faculty Senate as the committee had to adjourn before the Sick Leave Policy came up on the agenda. If the proposal is not considered at the next scheduled meeting, the Staff Senate plans to return to the President’s Council without the faculty component.
B. Communications Committee – Greg Needham asked the guests present, “What is the best way to communicate Staff Senate news to you?” He stated that Rod Surber had distributed the meeting announcement via campus email and placed the announcement on the Staff Senate website. There were no suggestions to do otherwise.

Josh Doak asked Greg to research the possibility of having something like a blog on the SS website so that issues brought to the attention of the Senate could be posted along with the appropriate responses. Greg will dialog with both Al Sadler from IT and Rod Surber.
C. Executive Budget Committee – Darren Fullerton is on the committee and is anxious to utilize the seat at the table. He requested having cost-saving ideas submitted to him to be presented so that he might present them to the BOG. He suggested use of the web based comment forms or email suggestions to the Staff Senate email address. A guest commented that her supervisor had circulated a comments form in her department. Darren stated that not all departments have done so, probably because not all departments have attended a meeting and are not aware of the request for suggestions.

Old Business:
A. Meeting dates for the remainder of the academic year were discussed: March 10, April 14, May 12 and June 9. The rotating site/time schedule seems to work out for staff, however, for administrative input, afternoon meetings prove difficult. Darren requested that senators check their calendars for the dates/times that are best and submit those to himself, Josh, or Olive by the end of next week. (Feb. 19, 2020)

New Business:
A. Budget for Staff Senate: Darren stated that Dr. Coltharp’s office has provided the paper and copy machine for materials distributed at the Staff Senate meetings. Darren has spoken with Rob Yust. He has approved an account in the Print Shop for the Staff Senate. Olive will contact Brian Estes.
B. Committee Development
   1. Elections Committee – The Staff Senate is scheduled to hold elections in May, 2010. Josh Doak, Ann Quade, Greg Needham, and Gary Edwards have agreed to serve on the
Elections Committee and meet in the near future to review the bylaws and make a determination on how to proceed. They will report at the next meeting.

2. Grievance Committee – Darren asked about the need of such a committee to help address staff issues. A representative staff member from the Human Resources Office stated that MSSU already has a Grievance Procedure and it is posted on the website in the handbook; stating that since it is a four-step process, adding another layer might not be helpful. Greg Needham and Erik Hilgendorf agreed to review the handbook for the Grievance Support Process and report at the next meeting.

3. Special Events Committee – IE: Staff recognition events, appreciation luncheons, dinners, and/or awards. Darren briefly reviewed the Missouri Western State College model called **Pay It Forward**. He commented that he perceives it to be a good tool to boost morale. Josh Doak and Debbie Woodmansee agreed to serve on the committee. They will review the MWSC site as well as others for ideas on how to model such a committee at Southern.


C. MSSU Staff Membership Club – like an employee club which would collect a small annual membership fee with which to purchase and mail get-well cards, send flowers, and/or provide care packages for the deployed military dependents/spouses of employees. A Human Resources staff representative expressed concerns that such a committee/club would violate FERPA laws. In addition, the HR office already sends birthday cards, and other types as appropriate when the office is notified of significant events. Discussion ensued where multiple opinions were expressed regarding the legal aspects of such a committee.

Darren suggested that the issue be addressed by the Benefits Committee and asked that they explore ideas that don’t violate FERPA laws. The question of who would oversee the funds raised and how it would be determined when the funds would be collected and used. It was expressed that the idea has merit and would positively impact campus morale.

**Comments and Announcements/Guest Input:** Darren opened the floor for the guests to express concerns and/or make comment about proceedings. Senator Josh Doak asked to revisit the question of how Out of State tuition waivers influence the budget. Linda Eis explained that if the out of state tuition is waived, MSSU would need to see an increase of 70-80 students to cover the lost revenue. In that the increase cannot be guaranteed and/or sustained, the risk to the budget could be devastating. However, to improve recruitment of the out of state resident, non-resident scholarships are available qualifying full-time students. Jeff Gibson added that Derek Skaggs, Director of Admissions, continues to explore new recruiting opportunities. For instance, strong consideration for placing someone in the Kansas City, Missouri area is being entertained.

There being no additional comments, Darren thanked the guests for their attendance and encouraged them to submit comments/concerns/ideas to the Staff Senate. He reminded them that the senate has a seat that the BOG. Darren expressed on behalf of the senate that the body strives to be informative, and asked the to tell a senator what it is they want to know.

**Adjournment:** Darren asked if there were any other business to being to the table for the benefit of the order. There being none, Greg Needham made the motion that the meeting be adjourned; Gregg Killingsworth seconded the motion; motion carried; meeting adjourned at 3:50 PM.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, March 10, 2010 in Webster Hall, room #111 at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by:
Olive Talley