Staff Senate Minutes
Wednesday, January 13, 2010  10:00 a.m. Physical Plant

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

Member(s) Absent / Excused: No absences

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

Call to Order: Following the mixer, Darren Fullerton called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Approval of Minutes: Darren called for changes in the minutes; there being none called for a motion to approve; Gregg Killingsworth motioned and Ted Wright made the second; motion carried and the minutes from the December 9, 2009 minutes approved as written. It was noted that the minutes did not seem to be linked to the website; the document was posted in December before the holidays. Olive will check with Rod Surber to report the broken link.

Administrative Comments: Upon opening the floor, Darren welcomed guests and thanked them for attending the mixer. Appreciation was expressed to Mike Fox for providing the refreshments at his own expense. The guests were informed that they are welcome to serve on Staff Senate Committees as they are established. Everyone was invited to make their desire to serve known.

A. Darren noted that the previously scheduled administrators who had agreed to address the Senate were called away to a late scheduled meeting with the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences representatives. MSSU administrators will be contacted to reschedule.

B. Darren reminded all present of Dr. Speck’s invitation for all to attend the semester opening comments which will be presented by Paul Wagner, Deputy Commissioner of the Missouri Department of Higher Education. All employees are invited to hear the report on the status of the state budget and the anticipated impact on higher education at 9 a.m., Friday, Jan. 15 in Taylor Performing Arts Center. Darren strongly encouraged all staff to attend.

C. At this time, Darren opened the floor for comments from the guests present for the meeting. He also reiterated that the comments/concerns form on the Staff Senate website is confidential. All forms are submitted anonymously. He asked everyone present to encourage all staff to use the form with confidence. The form can be hard copied and submitted in a plain envelope to any Senator, if one has privacy concerns.
Comments received are as follows:

- It was suggested that some of the Staff Senate meetings be held in the afternoon hours to provide an opportunity for evening shift staff to attend. Discussion ensued and the request will be implemented, beginning with the next meeting in February, 2010.
- A request was made to have an announcement at each first meeting clarifying the campus No Tobacco Policy. Complaints have been received that fountains, urinals, sinks and floors are being used as spittoons. Concerns were expressed that the fluid might present a bio-hazard situation for all who come in contact with the substance. The current No Smoking policy was reviewed: No Smoking Allowed Within 50 Feet Of Any Campus Building. It was noted that outdoor ashtrays have been placed at an acceptable distance from building entrances for the convenience of those who smoke.
- On the issue of campus employee morale, Darren asked for comments/ideas that might bring improvement. He stated that he serves on the Executive Budget Committee. Some items on the table for discussion regarding the financial climate at MSSU are: Text Rental Fees, Distance Learning Fees, Tuition stasis. He encouraged all staff personnel to examine carefully their own areas on campus for means by which to reduce operation costs and/or raise revenue. He also stated that although staff will not be receiving raises due to the financial constraints in the current year’s budget, there are ways to improve the climate for the benefit of MSSU employees. Use the website comment form to submit ideas [http://www.mssu.edu/staffsenate/commentform.htm](http://www.mssu.edu/staffsenate/commentform.htm) or simply email the Staff Senate at StaffSenate@mssu.edu. The Executive Budget Committee is interested in hearing from staff. It is primarily interested in job preservation for everyone on campus. On a related matter, Darren stated that staff often times feels removed from administrative decisions. He reminded everyone that he attends the Board of Governors meetings and has an opportunity to report each time they convene.
  1. Greg Killingsworth stated that he has been employed at MSSU for twelve years. This is the first time in his experience that staff has had representation on the BOG and he expressed his concern that the Staff Senate work diligently to voice the issues at every opportunity.
- A question regarding the actual financial gain to MSSU for the Athletic Department and others to hold camps and tournaments during holidays and other down (no class) periods. Should the expenses for custodial overtime, utility costs, etc. be reviewed? It has been observed that the community attendance/support for such events is minimal. “The take at the gate probably does not cover the expenses”, a guest commented. Another guest suggested that the overtime pay be reviewed as well. Many are asked to work (scheduled) holidays for 1½ pay rather than holiday pay. If we are observing a federally recognized holiday at another designated time during the year, shouldn’t the compensation for that day be 2 times the hourly pay? Darren agreed to check with the Athletic Director and Administration. He mentioned that the scheduling of events during holiday breaks is already being discussed at another level. Discussion continued in the realm of increasing revenues at athletic events with better advertising to bring awareness to the public. Also, employee attendance would raise morale for both groups represented: the athletes and the employees. A guest commented on how much the MO-SO / Gang Green group was enjoyed by the public. People were anxious to see what new outfits would be worn and what new antics the group would bring to the event. It was suggested that the group be re-established and supported by administration. This is possibly one way of reversing the declining morale on campus.
- A guest stated that in his/her fifteen year history at MSSU, there have always been morale issues. In the past morale would fluctuate. Now it seems we are losing privileges, raises, etc.; the morale won’t move into the upswing. A story was shared regarding a time when a staff member had to be gone for a six-week period and received ½ pay when the sick leave was exhausted. Upon return to work, the employee did not accrue ESL until the overage was repaid. The employee said that the effort to preserve financial solvency and borrow sick leave made them feel a certain loyalty to (then) MSSC.
- An idea was presented regarding the establishment of an “EMPLOYEES’ CLUB” in which a suggested fee of $1 per employee per month would grow a fund that would pay for flowers to be sent to those who have lost loved ones, cards for sick employees, host appreciation parties, etc. It was generally accepted that such an organization would evoke a sense of MSSU family.
- It was suggested that the Hempen house, now occupied by Alumni, be used as a Hospitality House where group luncheons or small parties might be held. It could also be rented to employees for private party use. It would serve nicely as a guest house for candidates interviewing for employment, or to be rented at a reduced/affordable rate while new employees find housing.
- A request for regularly scheduled training sessions in each department be offered. After the initial training following the implementation of new equipment, software, etc., it seems that further training is never scheduled and departments are expected to train new employees. Mike Fox stated that he has received and grant to fund and administrative approval to conduct re-training sessions on a semi-annual schedule to update the Physical Plant employees on the use of products, chemicals, and equipment. The sessions will also serve as an opportunity to share ideas on how to be more efficient, work safely and how to save institutional dollars, if possible. He is currently working on a three day training session by DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) Missouri Plant Managers Association involving over fifty area schools. Vendors will be available with new equipment. There will be multiple sessions and will be offered to faculty and staff of MSSU. The project is grant funded and all MSSU needs to provide is the meeting location.
- A staff person wanted to thank administration for approving the commission of a crew to clean the student dorms/apartments this past summer. The time savings enabled the custodial staff to concentrate on the deep cleaning and annual projects in their respective buildings.
- It was asked if MSSU has ever considered mandating that employees wear ID badges. Greg Needham stated that indeed the campus is currently looking at the “One Card System” that is scheduled to be implemented in the fall of 2010. There are some concerns as to how the new policy might be received generally. Following an industry trend observed by hospitals and K-12 schools, the ID badges will eliminate confusion regarding who is working on computers, etc. Also, the badges identify those whom campus guests can ask for assistance.
- A request was made to ask if IT personnel could take new equipment cartons with them when they complete an installation and vacate a building. It was suggested that this issue be addressed first to the supervisor.
- A concern was voiced regarding the shortage of phones that are available for building custodians to use to report work requests or emergencies. It was requested that perhaps the Staff Senate could request that departments allow the occasional use of an office telephone. At this time, Mike Fox reported that the issue is currently being addressed and as weather allows for repairs, telephones will be installed in the building custodial supply closets.
- It was noted that the Library room #413 and 413A share a light switch. In that one of the rooms is an open room, the lights are one daily until about 11:00 PM. Would it be cost effective to install a separate switch that would allow for the lighting in the conference room to be turned off unless occupied? On that topic of lighting, it was discussed as a possible long-range savings that MSSU might consider the phased installation of motion sensors for lighting buildings and parking lots. Discussion ensued regarding the initial expense of such devices. It was suggested that one might explore the possibility of obtaining a “green” grant through such agencies as the EPA or investigate the use of stimulus money for such improvements. It was noted that MSSU has employed Sandy Lovett to assist with grant writing.
- A guest inquired about the possibility that building custodians be consulted when new construction is being considered. Counter lighting, sink and facet locations, closets, etc. are important in the efficient completion of one’s custodial duties. It was reported that sinks have been installed too high to lift a full bucket into.
- It was requested that department heads be asked to inform those whom they supervise to call the Physical Plant office for assistance when moving furniture. Hours of very hard work have been ruined by moving office furniture incorrectly across tile floors. The tile floors are scheduled for stripping/waxing on a single time basis annually. It is very time consuming and very expensive to wax the campus floors and it is disheartening to have one’s efforts ruined. It is perceived as both inconsiderate and disrespectful.
- A guest asked about Darren’s findings regarding the summer hours inquiries. What was the feedback from Administration? Why did they initiate the change last summer? Darren reported that earlier in the year, many faculty pay changes were initiated and
that action prompted administration to examine how to level the financial burden across all employees. As of now, there has not been a determination for the Summer 2010. Darren did say that almost uniformly, employees did not like the 5:30 PM quit time. The reduced lunch period seemed to affect staff morale. One guest stated that they resolved the short lunch period by taking thirty minutes leave time daily so that she could have an hour each day to run errands and/or regroup. The amount of leave time used weekly amounted to only two hours total. On the positive side of the issue, the extension of summer hours to thirteen weeks was overwhelmingly well received. After discussion, it was agreed that the timing of the change had more to do effecting morale than the change itself. It seems that after the announcement of no pay raises, budget cuts in every department, etc., the increase of the work day to 5:30 PM and the fifteen minute reduction in the normal summer lunch period seemed more punitive than it did constructive. It was noted that the extended work day might have deterred the implementation of furloughs that other institutions have had to initiate in order to cut operational costs.

- Related to the Friday camps closure, discussion ensued regarding the need for better advertising announcing the closure. The MSSU.edu website needs to have a BOLD announcement; each department needs to publish summer hours on business cards, brochures, flyers, and any other correspondence. It was noted that for some offices that deal directly with students, the extended hours of 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM offered much improvement in their customer service Monday through Thursday. Once it became known that all the campus offices were closed on Friday, there seemed to be much less confusion among the cliental. In the past, it was difficult to convey to students/parents that only some offices were open on Friday. Often, students/families had to plan a second trip to campus to complete their business. This often lead to negative comments.
  
  i. Also, it was mentioned that the office closures on Friday offered the Physical Plant employees and opportunity to work a flexible schedule in order to complete major projects.

- The topic of class schedules at other institutions that run back to back. Outside of the actual winter holidays, the campus is open and classes commence for the spring semester. At the close of the spring semester, the summer session begins immediately. This allows for the entire campus to close for an extended period of time in the summer. The students can work at their full time jobs during summer months and still get a full academic year of studies. It was suggested that MSSU look into the possibility of establishing a like schedule if the savings in closing buildings for an extended period is indeed profitable.

- Some questions from the guests were as follows:
  
  i. Where is the financial savings from the VP vacancies (salaries)? A representative from the Business Office stated that the salary savings is banked with all savings and will be expended during budget cuts from the state. The interims (Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs) have stepped up in addition to the responsibilities of their previous positions at a savings that is beneficial to the MSSU budget and their services benefit the academic operations of the institution.

  ii. Are we (MSSU) heavy in administration? Response: We truly do not feel that way and here is why. Many of those in administration are working sixty-seventy hours every week on a forty hour salary. Most work long days, weekends, and work from home in the evenings.

  iii. How do we get equipment replaced that has been operating on borrowed time? Response: Make sure your supervisors know the condition of your equipment. Your supervisor is your voice to the administration. They can keep your needs on the minds of those who make financial decisions regarding Deferred Maintenance Items. If and when the funding becomes available, that is how you will finance repairs or replacements.

  iv. What is the most important issue on the mind of administrators right now? Response: Job preservation for every MSSU employee.

- On the topic of submitting concerns to the senate, a guest asked what issues should be taken to the Staff Senate and which should be addressed to supervisors. The perception is that when concerns are submitted to the Staff Senate, the senators will "fix it". Darren clarified stating that if one has addressed an issue with one’s supervisor
to no avail, then one could submit the matter of concern to the Staff Senate for representation. But, that the first step should always be with the individuals supervisor.

- A guest commented that there seem to be what was termed, “drones” on campus. This term was defined as an individual who does not do their job and is allowed to continue employment while others tend to the “drone’s” responsibilities. It was asked, “Why is this allowed?” It was suggested that specific complaints regarding the job performance be addressed first with one’s supervisor.

- Darren introduced Linda Eis, Treasurer, whom he asked to address the subject of Reserve Accounts. Responding to the question, “What is a Reserve Account and why does MSSU have one?” Ms. Eis took the floor. Darren noted that he asked Ms. Eis to speak on short notice and expressed appreciation that she agreed to do so without preparation time. She explained the expectations to which the institution must comply to meet the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) standard regarding financial fluidity. The reserve is actually our unrestricted cash balance on which the institution relies for operational costs when funding is reduced or cut. At the conclusion of FY08, the unrestricted cash balance had enough money in it to provide employee payment and operations for only twenty-three days; after which time the campus would be forced to close. She simply stated, “We would all have twenty-three days to find jobs.” The Board of Governors challenged the administration to find ways to reduce spending. In the fall 2008, a moratorium on travel was implemented, as well as other initiatives to cut expenses. A primary concern has always been job preservation. We have looked for ways to cut expenses without resorting to lay-offs, pay cuts, or furloughs. Ms. Eis stated that MSSU grew cash because everyone has helped in cutting operating costs. For instance, it was reported by Dr. Agee that employees saved the institution upwards of $70,000 in utilities through conservation efforts. These efforts need to continue. The state budget for the next couple of years indicates that we will have much less in appropriations so we need to continue our efforts in looking for ways to cut expenses and find new revenue sources. At this time, Ms. Eis reported that the MSSU reserves hold forty days of operation funds. That is a significant improvement over 23 days but 40 days is still less than two months. She explained that the expectation for an unrestricted cash balance is to have nine months of operational funding in savings; however, a reasonable expectation is a three to six months.

- Darren thanked Linda for her explanation and commented that understanding the necessity of reserve funding enables us to realize that the collective sacrifices will keep the doors open.

- Erik Hilgendorf expressed that with this knowledge, we (MSSU employees) need to adopt a more expedient attitude to launching revenue producing programs.

Committee Reports:

A. Sick Leave Policy Committee – the policy was presented to the President’s Council in December (2009). The council requested a tightening of the policy in regard to abuse of ESL and to clearly define what would constitute said abuse. It was suggested that the review be at the supervisor level. The committee needs to construct a release form for the senate to review a candidate’s ESL history on file in the Human Resources Office. It was discussed that the committee was asked if the sick leave policy was something that the faculty wanted, also. The Faculty Welfare Committee will present the initiative at the next meeting of the Faculty Senate. In the meantime, it was determined that the Staff Senate would proceed; adding the faculty to the policy later if the initiative is activated before action in the Faculty Senate.

Old Business:

A. Addressed out of agenda order in the Administrative Comments:

- “…” On the issue of campus employee morale, Darren asked for comments/ideas that might bring improvement. “…

New Business:

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- “…” He stated that he serves on the Executive Budget Committee. Some items on the table for discussion regarding the financial climate at MSSU are: Text Rental Fees, Distance Learning Fees, Tuition status. He encouraged all staff personnel to examine
carefully their own areas on campus for means by which to reduce operation costs and/or raise revenue. He also stated that although staff will not be receiving raises due to the financial constraints in the FY10 budget, there are ways to improve the climate for the benefit of MSSU employees. Use the website comment form to submit ideas http://www.mssu.edu/staffsenate/commentform.htm or simply email the Staff Senate at StaffSenate@mssu.edu. The Executive Budget Committee is interested in hearing from staff. It is primarily interested in job preservation fro everyone on campus. On a related matter, Darren stated that staff often times feels removed from administrative decisions. “

Comments and Announcements:

A. Darren reminded the senate to pass along the information to other campus personnel that President Speck will be holding listening meetings to which all campus employees are invited to attend.

Adjournment: Darren asked if there were any other business to being to the table for the benefit of the order. There being none, Mike Fox made the motion that the meeting be adjourned; Gregg Killingsworth seconded the motion; motion carried; meeting adjourned at 12:05 PM.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 10, 2010 / Mixer at 2:00 PM in Plaster Hall, room #306, meeting to follow at 2:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Olive Talley