Staff Senate Minutes
Wednesday, January 11, 2012


Member(s) Absent / Excused: Bob Tessman, Julie Wengert

Determination of Quorum: Fourteen of Sixteen active members present; quorum established.

Call to Order: Killingsworth called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.

Approval of Minutes: Harrington made a motion to approve the minutes; Epperson seconded the motion. Motion carried and the minutes from December 14th, 2011 were approved as written.

Administrative Comments: Killingsworth welcomed everyone including the gallery.

Rob Yust, Vice President for Business Affairs gave an updated budget presentation. Three to four weeks ago Dr. Speck received a call from the governor’s office; they were making a proposal to borrow a significant amount of money (approximately $106 million) from the reserves of five universities around the state with the other universities kicking in 50% of any state financial aid they receive. For MSSU that amounts to around $800,000. If we choose not to participate; our state budget would potentially be cut by 18.9% which amounts to $4 million. After much discussion the governor’s office threw that deal out. Now we are being told to prepare for a 5-10-15% cut in appropriations which is still a significant amount; 15% equates to $3.2 million, we are expecting about 10%. We have met with the Board of Governors several times, as well as the Legislators. We told them this is a terrible thing for Missouri Southern to have this kind of reduction in our appropriations. We have fed them a lot of information; at this point we are waiting to see what transpires, we know there will be a cut. We anticipate the CPI(Consumer Price Index) will be 3%; as soon as that is confirmed we can calculate how much to raise our tuition without being hit with a penalty. With a 3% increase we can generate $500,000 to $600,000; but a 10% reduction is a shortage of $2.2 million so there will still be a big gap. We had a 5% reduction two years ago, a 7% reduction this year and a potential reduction of 10%. We are looking at things we can do to cut costs. Immediately the renovation of the second floor of Hearnes has been put hold. Jo Kroll has stated her goals for the next three to four years which includes big increases in enrollment of online classes which will boost revenue. We are doing everything we can to make things better for students to come here and easier for them to stay here.

• Arwood asked about the RDG planning project. We are still going along with the planning; the major expense is with implementation. They have some tremendous ideas. One of the biggest issues we have is in student housing; we’re trying to figure out how to tackle that problem.

• Carlin asked if the foundation or development could raise funds for new housing. They have a lot of projects on their plate right now; funds for new housing would be a nurturing project that would take a long time to come to fruition.
• Killingsworth noted he had heard the Missouri Department of Transportation will receive federal grants to offset expenses due to flooding and tornadoes to rebuild the highway infrastructures but no dollar amount was given. Part of the budget issue is the money spent on cleanup.

• Epperson mentioned the 2% raise state employees are scheduled to receive, are we included in that? That is for state employees but the senators are saying they won’t approve that. Our representatives have been completely opposed to us giving raises; now they are saying “you’ve got to do what you’ve got to do.” We don’t care what everyone else is doing anymore; we financially have to see what if anything we can afford to do. Talley noted at some point in the near future administration can’t afford not to give raises; people have been loyal but at some point they have to be able to feed their families. Yust advised administration is very aware of that.

• Wilmoth asked if there is a point we go to Plan B; go from wait and see what the state is going to do to change our way of doing business and live with what we do have. Draw a line in the sand so we can keep our people and give raises. Yust responded a program review has already begun; which is a long and painful process. We do need to see if there are things we can do better and more efficiently. There are a lot of things we are looking at.

• Carlin asked if there are restrictions on the amount of money we can raise on our own (would that affect our state appropriations) or how we spend that money. There aren’t restrictions, but there’s not a big bucket of money out there. We are a victim of past actions – for years we kept our tuition so low, in fact that was one of our slogans “lowest tuition in the state.” We actually cut tuition at one point and we are paying the price for that now – we did it to ourselves. Last year we raised our tuition $20 and we’re still below everyone else. Wilmoth asked if local taxpayers could vote on some kind of levy. Is there any kind of help available?

• Harrington asked if Senate Bill 389 could be repealed. There are parts of it the will not repeal. We have sent recommendations, the first one is the CPI be repealed. Our two biggest revenue streams are appropriations and tuition and they state has us on both of them. Talley asked what we can do to support this effort. Call your state representative. We have a lobbyist in Jeff City doing the same thing. Talley asked for the name of the lobbyist.

• Carlin asked if we are looking at other programs that would draw students to MSSU? Yust is not aware if this is being done and noted there are expenses involved with bringing in new programs and it has to be approved by CBHE.

• Yust issued an invitation to share any ideas and suggestions with him; stop by his office or send an email.

• Talley asked if we have someone actively searching for grant opportunities (private, corporate, federal sectors). We do have a grant person. Talley then asked if that person is submitting a list of opportunities to President’s Council. We receive notification of certain opportunities, but have not seen anything of the magnitude referred to. It’s a very limited office.

• A member of the gallery asked about jobs being cut. Yust responded job preservation is the number one priority. There are a lot of positions that are budgeted but have not been filled.

• Talley mentioned rumors of another job survey – is that part of the assessment process? No, it was decided last fall that we need to do another survey (hopefully not with Evergreen). The job descriptions haven’t changed much, we need a third party to determine what the salaries should be. The dilemma is we don’t have the ability to give raises. Yust has suggested getting with HR to do some type of third party evaluation which will take some time, but before FY13 we need to do some type of across the board raise before implementing any type of increases in FY 14. But we can’t say we are going to do across the board raises; we can’t say we’re going to do the evaluation process. You have to have the survey to allow us to hire the right people. Wilmoth noted suggested wages are reduced because we live in Joplin. Additional discussion ensued.

• Bottom line is that we have to wait and see, we’re hoping the cut from the state will be less than they are saying.

• Arwood suggested one of the best things to spend money on would be fixing the retention rate. Figure out why we losing students and fix it. Yust agreed.

Committee Reports:
Killingsworth called for committee reports:

1. Communications Committee – Did not meet.
2. Election Committee – Doak presented an updated version of the Southern Service Champs Award nomination form which will be available the last week in March. Doak is seeking approval of the form from the Senate. Hardcopies would be sent to Doak, it was suggested he add his title. Talley commented on allowing one week for nominations; if it is open all the time a person could nominate multiple people.

3. Benefits Committee – Carlin reported the group met; they have received approval for orientation training; that project has been passed on. The group came up with a couple of new ideas – one is to use the benefits committee to notify employees of benefits they can receive through the state, information will be posted on the Staff Senate website.

4. Executive Committee – Killingsworth advised what brought Mr. Yust here today came about through a discussion with President’s Council concerning town hall type meetings; Yust volunteered to give us an update even though it will most likely be June before we have definitive information from the state. Potentially the town hall meetings will be in late June/early July and early December. We also discussed school spirit as a follow up to our last meeting.
   - Carlin asked about our Faculty Senate rep. Maria Bruggeman is teaching during our meeting time. Arwood noted Faculty Senate posts their minutes on a Blackboard site; access is limited. Concerning communication there are so many options, we need some consistency. Wilmoth noted SharePoint will be the repository for meeting minutes for all campus committees (this is coming from Shared Governance).
   - President’s Council stressed they are available anytime to come to Staff Senate or to meet with people on campus. As a result of guest comments about not being allowed to attend Staff Senate meetings President’s Council was asked to contact supervisors and encourage employees to attend Staff Senate, discussion followed. The possibility was raised that if someone was told not to attend there could be other factors such as involvement in a lot of committees that take time away from their office. PC wanted to know why they were told not to come to Staff Senate meetings. Several staff senators felt a campus-wide announcement was in order so that no one feels singled out. PC will be contacted and asked to send out an announcement or memo.
   - Killingsworth announced Staff Appreciation (families included) on January 18 at the basketball game (women’s game starts at 5:30); there will be an ice cream social between games. Staff Senate is supposed to be recognized at this event. There will be a campus-wide email going out; Bruggeman will coordinate with Aaron Lewis about group seating and recognition. Dr. Anglin asked us to send a memo to Faculty Senate asking them to attend this event in support of staff. We have the opportunity to return the favor on February 15, which is Faculty Appreciation night. Faculty workshops are coming up, that would be an opportunity to extend the invitation. With Staff Senate approval the faculty will be approached. Carlin asked why these events are separate; that was discussed with PC and they advised the events will likely be combined in the future. Dr. Anglin really wants to encourage mutual support.

5. Campus Committees:
   - Appreciation Committee – Epperson encouraged everyone to attend the Staff Appreciation event and come early to watch the girls team play. There will be an Extreme Home Makeover watch party Friday night in Phelps Theatre; snacks will be provided and everyone is invited.
   - Administrative Council – They have not met yet this year; next scheduled meeting is January 30.
   - Budget Advisory Council – Carlin will be the Staff Senate reporter for this committee going forward.
   - Shared Governance – There has not been a meeting since the last report.
   - Faculty Senate – Our representative is unable to attend due to teaching duties.

Old Business:
1. Relocating meetings: There was a time that Staff Senate met in different locations around campus; it has been suggested we do that again to make it easier for more people to be able to attend. Arwood noted her supervisor, Linda Eis, sent out an email encouraging attendance at today’s meeting, and several from that department are in the gallery. Our by-laws say we are supposed to meet on the same day of the week, the same time and the same location throughout the Senate year, if at all possible. Talley suggested an amendment to the by-laws that would allow us to have some flexibility in time and location. In addition, Talley noted we are the only group besides the Board of Governors that meet in the Boardroom; which gives us kind of an elitist position in the eyes of the staff, they may be intimidated by the location and potential security issues. Hopefully the top-down encouragement will help alleviate that situation. Epperson stated the Boardroom is the only room in Billingsly that is not rented out; we will not be moved from this location by an outside event.

• Killingsworth feels we can move our location for a little while without a by-law change; The by-laws are for consistency. The important thing is to publicize the location ahead of time. Previously when Staff Senate was changing locations a flyer was created and a hardcopy sent to each of the building’s occupants where the meeting was being held that month. Quade noted attendance was up when the meetings were moving around on campus. We have to meet the needs of our constituency. Talley offered to draft a change to the by-laws; it was decided not to make a by-law revision at this time. It was agreed for now we will keep the same meeting time but change the locations. McDaniel advised there are very few rooms available on Wednesdays at 9 am due to the large volume of classes meeting at that time, there are no rooms at all in Hearnes to meet (a large number of staff work in this building).

• In February Bruce will be presenting the staff survey results; it was agreed to keep that meeting at our current location. Epperson made a motion our March meeting be held at the Physical Plant at 9 am on Wednesday, March 14. Arwood seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

2. By-law revision of Article VIII Committees – revision approved via email
These committees will be comprised of a minimum of three current senators. Committee members are allowed to add non-senate staff members, pending approval by the chairperson of said committee, to assist in completing the committee’s charge. The committee will maintain an odd number of members for voting purposes.
This has been approved, no discussion needed.

New Business:

1. By-law review of Article IV, Section 2 Elected Representation and Groups
Restructuring the ratio of senators from each area – there have been some changes in the number of professional staff due to reclassification – do we need to look at the structure and revise the senate? Wilmoth provided numbers – full time staff (which includes the Physical Plant) went from 161 in September to 179 currently and professional staff went from 133 in September to 124 currently. There have also been reductions in faculty; one example is when coaches leave; replacements are professional staff, not faculty. There was a question about the Physical Plant ratio (there are 72 PP employees); there were no changes made in that area. The breakdown is Physical Plant 72, Classified 107 and Professional 124. It was agreed the changes are not significant enough to proceed with a by-law revision.

• When will the reclassification be finalized? Human Resources is waiting for job descriptions from the last department being reviewed, when those are received they will be sent to Evergreen then to the attorney and any recommended changes will be made. There is another department that would like to make some changes but formal job descriptions have not been received so we are looking at a couple of months at least to complete the project.

2. Bruce shared Doak had received an email from Rikki Smith encouraging participation in the Martin Luther King events on campus the week of January 16 – President’s Council encourages participation as well. Breakfast is in the ballroom Monday, January 16 at 7 am – tickets can be purchased at the door, on line or in our ticket office on campus. There are events all week long; on campus and off campus.

3. Bruce reported 171 of 400 surveys were returned; information is being compiled for the February meeting.
4. Talley (at Doak’s request) mentioned the email from Susan Simmons expressing gratitude for the “stress” lion she received and had asked that it be forwarded to the Appreciation Committee. Arwood responded she had forwarded the email to Alicia Hughes, a member of the Appreciation Committee.

5. Mention was made of some negative comments concerning Staff Senate.

6. The town hall meetings were brought up again and it was noted there has been some discussion about having President’s Council, Staff Senate, possibly Shared Governance and Faculty Senate give updates at these meetings. It could be done twice within a couple of days to allow everyone to attend.

7. Our committee minutes will be posted on SharePoint (the Intranet). It was discussed having Tessman make a presentation or create a handout. IT has not made the announcement yet concerning the Intranet, we may need to wait. At this point we can use SharePoint as a group; some committee minutes have been posted. Senators are encouraged to check this site. Intranet.mssu.edu, log in using your LioNet 6 digit password.

Comments and Announcements/Guest Input:

Adjournment: Carlin made a motion to adjourn. Hayes seconded the motion; motion carried.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 8 at 9 am in Billingsly room 310

Respectfully submitted by: Brenda McDaniel (please note the noise level at various times during the meeting prevented clear recording of the comments)