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: none

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

Call to Order: Darren Fullerton called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Approval of Minutes: Darren called for changes in the minutes; there being none called for a motion to approve; Ted Wright motioned and Debbie Woodmansee seconded; all in favor; motion carried and the minutes from the February 10, 2010 were approved as written.

Administrative Comments: Upon opening the floor, Darren welcomed guests and thanked them for attending the meeting.

A. Darren introduced Dr. Bruce Speck, MSSU President, who was in attendance to give a brief update on to progress of various campus projects. He encouraged staff to “celebrate” success every day. Items he feels should be celebrated are:
   a. The Health Science Building is on schedule to open Fall 2010 and will be the premier academic building on campus.
   b. This is the fourth consecutive term with increased enrollment.
   c. The MSSU cash balance is in good shape boasting approximately $24,800,000.
   d. All employees are still on full time status with no layoffs.
   e. Community support for Southern is good.
   f. The fund raising team is installed and hard at work.
   g. We are looking forward to the HLC (Higher Learning Commission) focus visit. The shared governance improvements are ready for review by the Board of Examiners.
   h. And finally, MSSU continues to offer an excellent education to students despite the difficulties endured recently.

Dr. Speck reiterated statements and disclosures regarding the economic difficulties at the state level. He discussed the expected levels of state appropriations over the next few years. Dr. Speck stated again that universities can expect 5.2% decrease in funding and that he anticipates the cuts might go as high as 7% in the near future. It will be necessary to increase tuition and administration is considering implementing the increase in the Spring 2011 semester.

Dr. Speck summarized each of the upcoming fiscal years in terms of funding for education from the state. In that 40% of the MSSU budget is funded from state appropriations, the financial future is bleak. MSSU has been
vigilant in cost cutting and building reserves so the institution is better prepared for this crisis than many others in Missouri. He stated because of the economy, higher education has become a national problem and state by state comparison is appropriate and necessary. Higher education will need to become a priority at both the state and national levels.

In the meantime, Dr. Speck stated that students will need to pay more for higher education. It is the general feeling that increased tuition will restrict access to a college education for some students. The answer might come in the form of Student Loan reform / restructure. MSSU is in the second year of a frozen tuition. CPI will allow a $5 increase, eventually. However, MSSU will approach the increase with prudence to assure sustainability.

The floor was opened for questions and discussion. Blanket in-state and out-of-state tuition was explored. There are no guarantees for increased enrollment to offset losses.

The book rental system at MSSU is a good draw for many students.

Graduate programs were another topic of discussion in regard to generating revenue.

Access Missouri is funding made available to students in both public and private education, however generally awards private institution applicants up to twice the assistance. This pulls from the prospective public institution student population and perpetuates the perception that private education is better than that which public institutions can provide. It was mentioned that the Missouri State Senate and the Governor are in support of a bill to amend Missouri Access to provide for equalization in distribution to both public and private education.

A senator asked for elaboration on the recent teaching restrictions for professional staff that have in the past served as adjunct instructors. The basic contractual differences between professional staff and faculty were outlined; defining the professional staff duties as full-time employment which leaves little wiggle room during the normal work day (8-5) for staff to teach. Some discussion ensued regarding the possibility of allowing professional staff to teach distance learning courses. The lines of where one job ends and the teaching duties begin are blurred and difficult to define. In light of the economy and hiring freeze, administration is trying to be flexible.

A senator inquired if administration has explored what impact a Fair Tax would have on education. An administrative professional staff member who works with the budget stated that the Fair Tax would be generally prohibitive. The sales tax would have to increase exponentially and would exempt groups who would pay nothing.

There being no additional questions or items for discussion, Dr. Speck thanked the Staff Senate for time on the agenda and invited any one with comments or questions to see him in his office or email him.

B. Darren introduced Rob Yust, Interim Vice President of Business Affairs.
   a. Construction Update(s):
      i. Mr. Yust proclaimed that the Health Science Building will offer MSSU the academic “WOW factor” it has needed. Combined with the new Billingsly Student Center and the Spiva Library, these three new buildings are very impressive and will be highlights of recruiting tours. The Health Science building will contain a state of the art simulation lab which will include robotic manikins for the nursing program.
      ii. The completion plan includes a top-down finishing order. The third floor will be cleaned, polished, furnished and staged for presentation. Possession of the third floor is slated for the end of this month (March, 2010).
      iii. Mr. Yust announced that the Recreation Center is almost complete; awaiting furnishings.
iv. The Mansion renovation project is very impressive. Mr. Yust complimented the MSSU construction crews on the great job. Possession of the Mansion is scheduled for the end of April (2010). A Senator asked if the funds for furnishing the Mansion are still available. Mr. Yust stated that there is a budget line for that purpose and the funds have not been used elsewhere. The project will be completed with the funds allocated for that purpose.

v. The Medical School is currently on hold pending communication from UMKC. MSSU expects to hear something around April 20th (2010).

vi. A guest inquired about the construction time line for the Hearnes Hall renovations. Rob stated that there are a few other construction projects that must be completed before renovations will commence at Hearnes. The English Department, which is now located on the third floor of Hearnes will need to move first. Kuhn Hall is undergoing renovation now so English can move in. The Dean of Arts and Sciences office will move to Webster in the Honors area. Honors will move to Taylor Hall. As for the timing, the best guess for a hopeful completion goal is the summer 2011. Additional moves will include International Studies to the current Student Employment area on the first floor of Hearnes. The third floor renovation will house the ACTS Office, Learning Center, Project Stay, and First Year Experience.

b. A guest inquired about when employees can expect to receive the one-time gift. [February 10, 2010 Staff Senate Meeting] Mr. Yust stated that the administration is still studying how it can be done and it will need to be approved by the Board of Governors. Dr. Speck interjected that Southern has gone two years without providing a raise to its employees and they (administration) really want to do something for the employees who have been diligent in their efforts to help MSSU pull through these tough economic times.

c. Finance Update: Mr. Yust stated that two years ago the MSSU finances were desperate. Since that time, the institution has pulled itself out of that hole. As of 2009-10 (FY09), MSSU is in better shape than it has ever been during his employment (at MSSU). He said that Southern can make it through 2010, but the future beyond that is uncertain. Mr. Yust stated that MSSU must be very inventive on how it can further cut costs and raise revenue.

Discussion ensued regarding the recruiting tools MSSU now has with its new buildings.

Committee Reports:

A. Sick Leave Policy Committee – Josh Doak reported that the committee met and after review of the Faculty Senate process, the committee has agreed to recommend that the Staff Senate move forward with the policy as submitted to the President’s Council in November 2009. It was established that no vote to proceed was necessary as the policy had previously passed via vote in the Staff Senate and the approved version is already in the hands of administration awaiting their consideration. It was noted that the Shared Sick Leave Policy was constructed using the existing FMLA benefits model.
   a. The Faculty Senate approval structure and operates on a semester to semester basis.
   b. The Faculty Senate has requested to amend the Shared Sick Leave Policy to include a defined “domestic partner” in the “immediate family” qualification clause of the benefit.

B. Communications Committee – Greg Needham stated that the committee has nothing to report at this time.

C. Benefits Committee – Ted Wright announced that Cheryl Dobson and Missy Snow have agreed to serve. The committee will meet next week to establish goals.

D. Election Committee – Josh Doak reported that the committee has met and has established the following procedure for the upcoming elections in May 2010:
Nominations will be submitted via the Staff Senate email account beginning the first of April. The University Announcements and Updates format will be used to notify constituents of the nomination process.

There are three positions opening for the May elections. Those currently holding those positions may be re-nominated to continue serving on the Staff Senate.

Elections will be held May 3-6, 2010.

i. May 3, 4, & 5 – electronic election via Staff Senate Election email account
ii. May 3, 4, & 5 – voter booth election to be held at the Recreation Center; 1:00-3:00 PM
iii. May 6 – voter booth election to be held at the Physical Plant; 9:00-11:00 AM

Grievance Committee – Darren stated that the committee will report under the Benefits Committee. Greg Needham and Erik Hilgendorf are reviewing the employee handbook to assess the Grievance Support Process. No report at this time.

Executive Budget Committee – Darren Fullerton stated that the committee has not met since the February Staff Senate meeting. Discussion ensued on various topics that concern the budget.

a. Board of Governors has approved increase in distance learning (DL) fees; from $35 to $50
b. Revisions for the full time out of state (OST) distance learners will be examined and policy changes will be effective the Fall 2010 semester.
   i. An administrative professional staff member explained that they (those who manage budget) have been challenged to generate revenue. It is agreed that MSSU employees/departments/administration have done all they can to cut costs. They were asked to increase revenue because there will be less and less room to cut costs. In regard to the distance learning increases; policies from other Missouri universities were examined and it was found that many charge full time distance learners OST tuition as well as a DL fee. MSSU will be following the trend that has already set by other Missouri universities. It is agreed that MSSU might lose some enrollment, however, it has been determined that the program will still increase revenue. Non-resident scholarships will be made available to assist the OST full time distance learning student.
   ii. Further discussion revolved around retention, advertisement, recruiting.
   c. Revisions in the Book Rental Procedures include examination of multi-book fees for an individual class.

Special Events Committee – Did not meet; nothing to report.

Old Business: None to address.

New Business:

A. Darren shared that he attended the Board of Governors Retreat and was pleased to report that it was educational, upbeat and very informative. He encouraged everyone to attend Dr. Speck’s Listening Meetings; next one scheduled Friday, March 12 at 8:00 AM.

B. Spring Break Hours – Darren explained the origin of the recently implemented Spring Break hours (adapting to the established summer 4 day schedule). He received a call from Rob Yust who stated that the revision was being considered. Darren polled a few individuals and reported to Rob that the consensus of his informal poll was in agreement with changing the hours for Spring Break week. Since the announcement, there has been a mixed bag of opinions. Those in opposition noted the alignment of area public school/university break schedules. It was explained by an administrative professional staff that the break schedule is established by the Academic Affairs Office on a two year calendar.
   a. A senator inquired about the reason for the break work schedule change. It was explained that complaints have been received regarding the many times in the academic year that both students and faculty have time off, but staff is required to work. The implementation of the revised break hours was an attempt to provide a day off during that week to those who are required to work 40 hours.
also stated that the implementation of the 4 day or 5 day schedule is a matter of departmental (head) discretion. It was also noted that in order to complete work in progress, overtime needs to be avoided and adjustments to hours worked during the break might be necessary. It was noted that the need to work to complete projects that cannot be interrupted might appear punitive. Department heads and supervisors are encouraged to be flexible.

b. Darren stressed that the Staff Senate wishes to focus on and emphasize that which is positive. The decision was made in hopes of improving staff morale. He stated that we have a chance to be heard and the Staff Senate can make suggestions to administration. In this instance it was the Spring Break staff hours.

C. MSSU Insurance Committee – Greg Needham serves on the committee in the capacity of a professional staff representative and in so has been instrumentally informative to the Staff Senate. His term is due to expire and Darren made a request to Debbie Dutch Kelley that a position for a Staff Senator on the committee be established. It was noted that there is not a position for a Faculty Staff Senator on the Insurance Committee.

D. One Time Gift – Josh Doak revisited this item from Rob Yust’s comments at the February meeting. Josh proposed that the one-time gift (no matter the amount) might be viewed by the public in a negative light. He proposed that administration consider trading that option with offering staff a personal day instead. Comments from administrative staff indicated that in whatever form the gift was awarded, it will have to take place before the beginning of the next fiscal year (July 1, 2010). With low morale being the primary issue, it was discussed that a personal day would be well received. A monetary one-time gift might influence an employee’s tax bracket as well as increase the work load for Human Resources Office personnel in the effort to offset tax ramifications.
   a. It was suggested that staff be polled to determine a majority preference.

Comments and Announcements/Guest Input
In light of the Missouri Governor’s recent announcement that state agencies will no longer recognize holidays and will be implementing the PTO structure, discussion ensued regarding the time off benefit structure of other universities and businesses in Missouri. Some have implemented a Personal Time Off (PTO) policy; meaning there are no recognized holidays. Employees pull from an accrued PTO account for any time away from their jobs. A Human Resources professional staff member warned that the PTO policy often times results in less recognized pay time off. Fewer days are banked than are currently recognized as holidays. An administrative professional staff member speculated that the Governor might be restructuring benefits in order to avoid the laying off of employees.

Adjournment: Darren asked if there was any other business to bring to the table for the benefit of the order. There being none, Erik Hilgendorf made the motion that the meeting be adjourned; Ann Quade seconded the motion; motion carried; meeting adjourned at 10:40 AM.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 in the Spiva Library, room #413 at 2:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:
Olive Talley