Staff Senate Minutes  
Wednesday, November 17th, 2010  9:00 AM, Billingsly Board Room #310

Members Present: Josh Doak, Debbie Woodmansee, Erik Hilgendorf, Olive Talley, Gary Edwards, Bob Harrington, Julie Wengert, Brenda Hayes, Brenda McDaniel, Leslie Willis, Ann Quade, Michelle Arwood and Mike Davies.

Member(s) Absent / Excused: Ted Wright, Greg Killingsworth and Heidi Carlin

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

Call to Order: Erik Hilgendorf called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Approval of Minutes: Erik called for changes in the minutes; there being none asked for a motion to approve; Julie Wengert motioned and Olive Talley seconded; all in favor; motion carried and the minutes from Oct. 13th 2010 were approved as written.

Administrative/Special Guest Comments: None

Committee Reports:

1. Communications Committee – Debbie Woodmansee reported that the Staff Senate e-mail address was deactivated due to confusion on making it a distribution list. E-mail will be reactivated.

   Josh Doak reported that the University Marketing and Relations department updated the Staff Senate website to reflect correct meeting dates and meeting notes. Whenever the new content management system goes into effect, a representative of the Staff Senate will have access to control and update the site.

2. Election Committee – No Report


4. Executive Budget Committee – Nothing to report.

5. Appreciation Committee – No Report

Old Business:

1. Staff Advocacy Policy Proposal – Erik Hilgendorf represented the idea of the Staff Advocacy policy for discussion. He mentioned that the rough draft is tied to the ideas of the faculty grievance policy on pages 31-38. Policy to outline due process steps for the employee.

   a. Michelle Arwood posed the question, “What would it cover?” Erik replied that it would cover both due process steps for disciplinary and personal work issues.

   b. Bob Harrington asked, “What is missing from current University staff policies?” Erik mentioned that the current policies do not have a third party advocate to be present with the employee.
c. Josh Doak followed the line of questioning, asking how this policy varies from the peer review appeal that is available to staff. Discussion among various senators brought out the fact that the peer review committees formed are not able to communicate with the parties involved with the appeal. This policy would allow more transparency and ability to communicate from all sides.

Erik reiterated after questions, that it is the responsibility of the Staff Senate to respond to issues communicated by other staff.

2. Lion Heart Award-Erik Hilgendorf shared an outline of a possible quarterly recognition award that the University could adopt to go with Superior Service Awards. The idea is to recognize one classified, one physical plant and one professional staff member every three months for outstanding service. Individual selected would receive a gift from one of several supporters (Athletics, Rec Services, Sodexo, Bookstore (discount only), Ticket Office, etc.). Nominations would be handled by the Benefits Committee.
   a. It was noted by a senator that the Lion Heart Award name is used by the Alumni Office. A new name would be needed if idea is passed by Staff Senate.

New Business:

1. Review of Bereavement Policy-Michelle Arwood received comments about the University’s bereavement policy. The current policy does not pay employees for time off to attend funerals unless they take sick leave (up to 3 days with additional 2 day if extensive travel is necessary) or vacation time. The individuals she spoke with expressed that if an individual has little or no sick time left, they shouldn’t be forced to go without pay to attend a funeral.
   a. A senator remarked during conversation that if any individual exhausts all leave balances while attending to a loved one with serious medical issues, bereavement should be added to the current Sick Leave Pool. Like the sick leave policy, an obituary or death certificate could serve as documentation for attending the funeral.
      i. Erik Hilgendorf stated that the original Shared Sick Leave Committee should reconvene and examine adding bereavement into current policy.

2. Professional Development-Michelle Arwood questioned the steps necessary for staff to get funds for professional development. She mentioned that faculty received $50,000 for professional development, and Rob Yust stated at the previous meeting that funds are loosening up for development, since it’s not sensible to think we can function long-term without employee development.

   Erik Hilgendorf and Josh Doak answered saying that any request for professional development had to prove value to the University and that those requests should be given to the department head who would give them to Rob.

3. Secretarial Pool Proposal-Ann Quade presented a proposal that she, Olive Talley and Josh Doak formulated. The proposal would provide needed secretarial/clerical assistance to departments with either unfilled positions and/or seasonal work load increase (example: assist Alumni Office during homecoming week). This would strictly be a voluntary program that secretaries and clerical staff members could participate in. Ann informed the senate and she and Olive had received positive feedback from majority secretaries and clerks they spoke with. Josh Doak added that two of the three secretaries he communicated with would be willing to participate. Voting on policy was tabled to next meeting to allow time for senators to review document and discuss with coworkers.

4. Proclamation-Erik Hilgendorf drafted a letter to submit to the President’s Council and Board of Governors stating the staff’s appreciation for defraying the oft-times double digit increase in health care coverage premiums (University is paying for half of the 16.8% increase in health insurance premiums starting January 2011). Staff Senate unanimously agreed approval for Erik to present letters.
5. Fall & Spring Break Staff Schedule-Brenda Hayes presented proposal with request for additional time off during the fall and spring break periods for staff. Proposal gives different scenarios for each break (example: fall break have Monday off and work Tuesday or work Monday and off on Tuesday). The proposal would request that staff be paid for the days off.
   a. Conversation around the room ensued over the likelihood of proposal passing through the President’s Council given that the University is looking for non-monetary ways to benefit employees. Michelle Arwood mentioned that we already get a shortened week of work in the summer and still receive a full work week of pay. The idea of voluntary time-off without pay or having to use vacation was also mentioned. Proposal was tabled for discussion in the December meeting.

6. Bylaw Addition: Involuntary Status Change-The Staff Senate amended article five, section five of the Staff Senate bylaws to allow staff members serving in the Staff Senate to retain seat in event of an involuntary transfer to different Staff group. Bylaw language is stated below.

   “When a Senator voluntarily transfers from one Staff group to another, a letter of resignation to the Senate through the Senate President shall be submitted before the next scheduled meeting. In the event of an involuntary transfer to different Staff group, Senator can retain seat in senate.”

Comments and Announcements/Guest Input:

1. Julie Wengert asked that with the change of the Superior Service Awards from three to six, had specific criteria also been set to help people know the guidelines of what constitutes superior service. Erik Hilgendorf responded that the lack of time between the passage of the Superior Service Awards and time for nominations wasn’t sufficient. Any specific criteria will have to wait till 2011.
   a. Erik also announced that three Staff Senators will be on the Superior Service selection committee.

2. Julie Wengert posed the question of whether representation from Staff Senate should be on the Enrollment Management Committee. The committee has representation from both the Faculty and Student Staff. Josh Doak stated he would speak with Derek Skaggs about a position for Staff Senate.

3. Erik Hilgendorf presented Steve Wagner, Professor of Social Science as the Faculty Senate liaison to the Staff Senate. He will be present at each Staff Senate meeting to report any activities that the Faculty Senate is working on that Staff Senate can participate with, and vice versa Erik will be the liaison to the Faculty Senate.

Adjournment: Erik 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; Leslie Willis seconded the motion; motion carried; meeting adjourned at 10:40 AM.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 15th, 2010 at 9:00 AM. Billingsly Student Center room 310 (Board room).

Respectfully submitted by:
Josh Doak