

January 14, 2003

GUEST SPEAKER: DR. DON CABANA

Dr. Don Cabana, President of Faculty Senate addressed Staff Council.

There are certain issues that both Staff Council and Faculty Senate can find common ground, one of these is Benefits. A study done last year by Dr. Art Kaul revealed that over a 7-year period the total pay raise percentage was 16 to 17 percent. The increase of insurance cost over the same period was 60 percent. This effects all university employees as well as other state employees. At a recent Faculty Senate retreat Russ Willis of Human Resources spoke on the issue of benefits. In terms of monies put into state employee's health care by legislatures, Mississippi ranks 50th. The national average varies greatly by region. While all other 49 states contribute from one-percent up to 9-percent, Mississippi's legislature contributes less than one-percent. Correspondingly annual required deductibles for Mississippi's state employees are the highest in the nation.

The Executive Director of Mississippi's Health Insurance Board has agreed to speak at a Faculty Senate meeting in February or March. All Staff Council members are invited and encouraged to attend. Mississippi ranks consistently as one of the most unhealthy states in the union. Sadly, we rank among the highest in areas of unwed pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, strokes, and renal failure. Consequently our insurance rates are higher. The out of pocket cost of staying healthy (preventative health care) is very expensive. State of Mississippi employee's insurance does not cover prevention health care costs. We feel if insurance covered preventative costs, more Mississippians would be able to benefit from healthier living. This would make Mississippi a healthier state, while increasing coverage and eliminating this out of pocket expense. State employees need to realize that in the future we may be faced with a decision of pay raise vs. benefits. The Health Insurance Board decides what is covered. This meeting with the Health Insurance Board Executive Director is an excellent forum for our voices to be heard regarding this issue. We need to build a good relationship with the Health Insurance Board. It is important to all employees that we point out an investment into preventative health care will

benefit our employees as well as the state of Mississippi in several ways. The legislative session is coming and this is an election year. Many of our legislators understand our current situation but need to realize there is much more to what ails us than little or no pay raises. Our continually increasing insurance costs are more damaging. State employees have been given the short end of the stick on insurance. We have suffered through several years of bad administration of our health plan.

The Faculty Senates of all of the institutions of higher learning will be working together this year on this issue. This would be enhanced by the cooperation of the Staff Councils at each university. This year is a window of opportunity to say to our legislature “Give us help or we will take a broom and clean house.” It is most important for Southern Miss to lead this initiative, as we are located in South Mississippi. We haven’t always had the political influence that we have now. The legislature seems to want to help on the short term. We need to send a strong message that we need long term commitments to higher education. The best way to get our message across is for each employee to contact his or her legislator on a one-to-one basis. Mass mailings are not effective. A simple phone call, e-mail, or personal letter to your legislator will go much further to help our cause. Dr. Cabana will advise Staff Council on the date and time of the meeting with the Health Insurance Board Executive Director. He emphasized on how important attendance to this meeting was.

On Wednesday, Dr. Cabana and Dr. Thames attended the Education Council meetings and reception in Jackson. The legislature does recognize our troubles. Dr. Thames was the only university president to attend the meetings, press conference, and reception. It was very clear to the legislators, IHL board members, and Education Council members that Dr. Thames is very concerned about the welfare of Southern Miss and its employees.

Contact numbers and addresses for our legislators are in the local phone book, and on the state of Mississippi Web site. Please spread the word to contact these important individuals.

1.0 Call to Order

President Posey called the meeting to order at 9:42 a.m.

The following members were present: Rusty Anderson, Susan Blackwell, Cheryl Burnette, Kim Busche, Melissa Carpenter, Sally Donovan, Mike Giles, John Green, John Hayman, Keri Hensarling, Myra Herndon, Mary Ann Iverson, Robin Johnson, Kenton McNeese, Polly Odom, Pam Posey, Jan Roberts, Arlin Steen, Frances Sudduth, and Mary Virgil

2.0 Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted with minor corrections.

3.0 Call for Proxies

The following members were represented by proxy: Shannon Davis by John Green, Carol Dunaway by Sally Donovan, Kathy Hayman by Susie Barefield, David Kinsey by Arlin Steen, Trisha Wilbanks by Keri Hensarling, and Sam Williams by John Hayman.

The following members were absent without representation: Bradley Bridges, Tommy Dye, Lin Harper, Willie Heard, Charmine Hill, Larry McMickle, and Ray Scott.

4.0 Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the November meeting were approved with minor corrections.

The minutes for the December meeting were approved with minor corrections.

5.0 Officer's Reports

5.1 President's Report – Pam Posey

- * There were no cabinet meetings from 11/25 through 1/13.
- * Thank you to the Holiday Reception Committee for a great job. The dessert reception was well attended and everyone enjoyed it.
- * The December IHL Board meeting was for IHL members and institution presidents only.
- * Attendance to Staff Council meetings is very important. As an elected member, each council member represents at least 44 staff

members at each meeting. Your attendance gives a voice to the staff you represent. Those members who violate the attendance policy are sent letters advising them of their membership status. Currently we have two seats on the Staff Council that will be declared vacant due to excessive absences. Other members who may be close to violating the absence policy will be notified by letter this month. Should you have any questions about your current attendance status, please contact Pam Posey.

5.2 President-Elect's Report - Kenton McNeese

Upcoming Meetings

1. IHL will meet on Thursday, January 16, 2003, at the Board Office. Pam and I will be attending.
2. Faculty Senate will meet on Friday, January 17, 2003, at 2 p.m. in the Union Hall of Honors. I will be in attendance.
3. Staff Council Executive Committee will meet next Tuesday, January 21, 2003, in Room 102 of the Chain Technology building. All chairs of committees are encouraged to attend.
4. Cabinet's next scheduled meeting is to be Monday, January 27, 2003.

Cabinet, January 13

* Dr. Jay Grimes opened the meeting with words of positive encouragement for the university.

* Dr. Linda McFall reported on the budgeting process within the Legislature and stated positively on the likelihood of seeing our previously feared cuts being avoided if appropriations take place as discussed. The bodies will make an official decision within the next few weeks, unlike previous decisions concerning the budget being placed as a final business item for the bodies.

* Dr. Grimes reported that no new part-time faculty (adjunct) hires would take place after the beginning of classes in the future.

* Dr. Thames will present the State of the University address on Friday, January 17, 2003, at 9 a.m. Classes will be dismissed from 9 to 9:50 a.m., and offices are to close from 9 to 10 a.m. for this address. All faculty, staff, and students are strongly urged to attend. Gulf Coast, Stennis Space Center, and Gulf Coast Research Lab will also observe these times, and the address will be available

via Web cast on each campus. The PowerPoint presentation will be made available by download through the university Web site.

* The next men's home basketball game will be Saturday, January 25, 2003, at the Gulf Coast Coliseum against CUSA rival Houston. Please attend this game and show your support for the Eagles and the Gulf Coast.

* Susan Hollandsworth reported on the capital campaign. Currently an audit is taking place to provide accurate information for the office and to allow for follow-up on many planned gifts.

* The 3-D Art Building addition will have its official groundbreaking on Friday, January 17, 2003, in the afternoon. Tommy Delaney of Meridian is responsible for a large gift to assist with this project.

* Dr. Jim Williams reported on the Coast enrollment, and stated numbers are up. There was quite a bit of confusion caused by the half-day period of late enrollment on the Coast campus. It was discussed, and recommendations should be forthcoming. Next year's academic calendar will provide for a longer period of time for late enrollment.

* Dr. Tim Hudson asked how we might encourage more faculty, staff, and students to join the USM Foundation, as he wants all to do.

* Dr. David Potter, the President of Delta State University was named as Commissioner of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning recently, and our administration sees this as a positive move for all institutions within the state of Mississippi.

* Dr. Hudson posed the question regarding this year's Christmas holiday break. He asked the opinion of staff council and for this body to follow up with the request.

* Dr. Cabana posed a second question concerning the calendar with a recommendation of exchanging the Mardi Gras holiday for the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving. This would promote responsibility to the community with concerns of the travel that take place over the Thanksgiving season for our students.

* The Technology Security Policy was revisited, and a concern was brought forth regarding the conflicting wording of the document. In one part, a PC may be seized for "any reason"; in another part, a PC may be seized for "any appropriate reason." The request will be forwarded to OTR for revisiting the wording of this document.

* Blake Hamm, Student Government Association President reported he had not received any negative comments concerning the enrollment process this semester and was pleased of this and the fact that enrollment had increased again. Enrollment numbers will be available this Friday, January 17, 2003.

* The Miss Southern Pageant will be held February 15, 2003. There will be more participants than in previous years. The Foundation office is arranging a special luncheon for all past Miss Southerns.

* On February 8, 2003, the SGA will plant 300 trees as a community service project within the city of Hattiesburg.

* David Hansen reported on the men's basketball program and the recent successes of the team. The next home game will be on the Coast on January 25, and then back at "The Green House" on January 29, 2003, to meet CUSA rival Louisville. The Houston bowl may reconsider dropping CUSA from its bowl alliance due to the game ratings being ninth out of 17 games broadcast on that day. Football signing is the first week of February, and things are looking great with the new recruits as well as the new coaching changes. Derrick Nix is struggling with kidney dialysis three times a week now and will incur kidney transplant as soon as possible. There will be a fund created to assist the Nix family with the expenses not covered by medical insurance, and details will be made available soon. The athletic facility is scheduled for completion by February 28, 2003, and the staff is looking forward to the move.

* Dr. Cecil Burge reported on the move of ORSP to Bond Hall and the submission of a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation. This will hopefully result in a long-term program in conjunction with the "No Child Left Behind" program to assist students in achieving their goal of providing every child with a quality education.

* Dr. Joe Paul restated the enrollment increases and noted the fact of the academic suspension changes for this past semester. A student attaining a 0.50 for a given semester will be placed on academic suspension in the future. The policy had required a 0.00.

5.3 Assignment of Action Items

Item #87: Request a definition of "Essential Personnel"

Assigned to the Salaries and Benefits Committee

“At what point do we consider all of our university employees’ lives of equal value? If the weather is deemed too severe for even one employee to be told conditions are favorable for it to be too dangerous to report to work, then it should be considered too dangerous for every employee to report to work, no matter what position they may hold. Who determines who essential personnel are? Could a definition of essential be put forth and made clear? Many employees do have offices in areas with other staff who would support the university in an emergency situation; however, their jobs are in no way related to having any responsibilities for emergency services. Why would these people be asked to come in just because their desks are in a building that houses emergency-response personnel? What is the point in having emergency-response teams set up if you are going to require all of your employees to come in under dangerous conditions anyway? If conditions are severe and the university closes, why would we risk making all employees in a particular area come out in the weather? Should not be all be allowed to stay off the roads and safe at home with their families? If a situation occurs during the closing, a call would go to the campus police, they in turn would have a list of emergency-support teams, make a call to the crew leader of the team deemed necessary, and then that crew leader would call his team about responding – once an incident occurs. Why risk anyone driving in unsafe conditions because something might happen in a building? Could work on buildings be done once conditions are better and of less risk to the safety of individuals? While the university is a safe entity, getting here and going home may not be as safe. Also many have children who would not be in school, and coming out in dangerous weather means they have to take their children out in unsafe conditions to either work or to a sitter. It would be greatly appreciated if the time were taken to reevaluate the university’s policy and position during severe weather conditions and for all personnel to be held in equal value.”

Item #88: 2003–2004 Holiday Schedule

Assigned to the Salaries and Benefits Committee

“The respective group that plans the holiday schedule needs to reschedule the Christmas/New Year’s holiday. As it is now, the staff will work on a Monday in December prior to the break and return on

a Friday in January. On the request of many staff members and the recommendation of the cabinet, we need to have the schedule rearranged to make the holiday time more useful for those traveling. Rearranging the days to have the staff work through Friday, December 19, 2003 and return on Monday, January 5, 2004 would be the most logical decision. Graduation will be held on Saturday, December 13, 2003, for the fall semester and classes will not resume until January 12, 2004. The timing of faculty and student return will allow for such a schedule. It was mentioned in cabinet of the need for offices to be open or available for work on this graduation Saturday. If the University opens on that Saturday for normal hours, then it would be feasible to allow for the Monday and Friday to serve as a holidays. Please investigate the possibilities.”

6.0 Old Business – none

7.0 Committee Reports

7.1 Constitution and Bylaws – Kathy Hayman – no report

7.2 Legislative – Rusty Anderson – no report

7.3 Salaries and Benefits – John Hayman

The committee will meet at the conclusion of this meeting to work on assigned action items.

7.4 University Relations and Cultural Diversity – Robin Johnson

There is difficulty in scheduling a face-to-face meeting with Dr. Paul due to the fact that he and Robin are located on two different campuses. He and Robin have tried several times. He wants to meet face-to-face to discuss action item #86 (concerns by the residence life custodians). The suggestion was made that possibly a committee member or President Posey could meet with him and report to Robin. Robin will try to schedule again.

7.5 Technology and Training – Lin Harper – no report

7.6 Other Committee Reports

A. Parking Appeals Committee – David Kinsey – no report

B. Transportation Committee – Polly Odom

Royce Pierce presided over the meeting. He indicated that his annual report would be submitted to Dr. Bud Ginn along with a request to appoint a new chair for the Transportation Committee. Dr. Bill Scarborough suggested that the new chair look at the membership and mission of the committee because there are too many members listed who do not show up for meetings. Cecil Wilson reported that the gated lot would probably be ready this summer. He distributed a draft policy for marketing the sale of 93 spaces. The suggested price is \$100 per semester with faculty/staff given the first option. There was discussion relative to re-zoning the area around the field house, Charcoal Room lot, and University Boulevard. The SGA representatives were concerned about the possible loss of Residence Zone parking. After discussion, the Charcoal Room lot will remain faculty/staff and the University Boulevard area will remain residential parking. Meter parking will be installed at the field house to accommodate for visitors. The SGA is still working on a policy regarding the issuance of visitor parking passes.

C. Student Life Center – Kathy Hayman

Work began on January 6, 2003. Pictures are being taken and will be regularly updated on the USM Bookstore Web site.

D. Sexual Harassment – Cheryl Burnette – no report

8.0 New Business

8.1 The following action items are still listed as outstanding. The committees that have been assigned these items need to meet and report to the Staff Council on the status of these action items.

#75 – A set dollar amount for pay raises as opposed to a percentage

for the 2001–2002 pay raise – Salaries and Benefits, assigned 10/2/2001

#77 – Payroll reporting problems – Salaries and Benefits, assigned 11/6/2001

#80 – Cleaning and refreshing of buildings and facilities – University Relations and Cultural Diversity, assigned 4/2/2002

#81 – Fall break – Salaries and Benefits, assigned 9/3/2002

#82 – Full paid benefits for retirees – Salaries and Benefits, assigned 9/3/2002

#83 – Two semester classes and \$100 book allowance – Salaries and Benefits, assigned 10/2002

#84 – Level adjustment, Salaries and Benefits, assigned 10/2002

#85 – Employee wellness program – President Elect McNeese assigned 10/2002

#86 – Concerns by Residence Life custodians and maintenance – University Relations and Cultural Diversity, assigned 10/2002

8.2 We have been asked by the Cabinet to discuss possible amendments to the 2003–2004 holiday schedule. The university is scheduled to be open on Monday, December 22, 2003, and then reopen on Friday, January 2, 2004. There has been some discussion on the feasibility of this as well as discussions on how a change in the schedule could also be a much needed morale boost for the staff.

A motion was made by Mike Giles and seconded by Robin Johnson as follows:

“I move that staff members receive Monday, December, 22, 2003, and Friday, January 2, 2004, as an intercession break in consideration of the fall break on Thursday, October 16, and Friday, October 17, 2003, made available for students and faculty.”

General discussion was held with several options relating to this issue being discussed. The motion was voted on and carried. President Posey and President–Elect McNeese will carry our suggestions to the next Cabinet meeting. Staff Council members

who receive feedback relating to this issue need to forward it to President Posey. Mike Giles will research the schedules of Mississippi State, Ole Miss, and Jackson State.

9.0 Announcements

9.1 The Staff Council meeting for February will be held February 4 in Commons Banquet Rooms A and B at 9:30 a.m.

9.2 Career Fair will be held February 4.

9.3 Technology Security Policies can be found online at www.usm.edu/sec, and in the University Handbook.

9.4 The ongoing construction on campus as made zoning changes necessary. Please continually check this.

9.5 The Expanding Excellence schedule can be found online at www.ee.usm.edu.

9.6 A suggestion concerning the establishment of a Staff Assistance Fund is being considered. Any ideas on this can be sent to President Posey.

10.0 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Busche
Recording Secretary
January 14, 2003