

Staff Council Minutes  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
January 10, 2006

1.0 Call to order 9:47 AM

2.0 Adoption of Agenda

Motion made to accept agenda with reservation to change if necessary by Margaret Firth and seconded Keith Long. Unanimously approved.

3.0 Approval of Minutes

Motion to accept the October and November proposed minutes was made by Karen Lott and seconded by Pam Posey. Unanimously approved.

4.0 Officer Reports

4.1 President's Report - Valerie Horne

4.1.1 Action Items - Staff Council has no new action items.

4.1.2 Liaison Committee Reports - Cabinet, Heroes of Katrina

This report will be sent by e-mail to the membership.

**Cabinet-December 5, 2005 - Canceled**

**Cabinet - December 12, 2005**

Bob Pierce announced that there have been a few changes made in the design of the University ring.

Tim Ryan reported that we have received 290 gifts totaling \$144,000 for the Katrina Relief Fund.

Dr. Grimes reported that the SAC's probation has been lifted. However, reaffirmation is still coming. He asked the Deans to please work with students concerning the bowl game. Dr. Thames echoed congratulations on the hard work done regarding SAC's. He said the university received big respect on how we handled it. Dr. Moore reported that graduation was Saturday at Reed Green.

Gregg Lassen reported that the University is in a severe cash flow crisis. Please no unnecessary travel and no new positions.

Dr. Paul reported that we are down 550 students and \$2 million in lost r

**IHL Board Meeting-December 15, 2005**

I did not attend; however, I have provided handouts of the press releases.

**Cabinet-December 19, 2005 - Canceled**

**Heroes of Hurricane Katrina's Meeting-December 19, 2005**

The Heroes of Katrina Committee met Monday, December 19, in the Gulf Coast Campus Student Service Center. The President and the Provost tasked this committee with developing a process and procedure to recognize Heroes of Katrina. The committee consisted of two

representatives from Faculty Senate, Patsy Anderson and Dr. Myron Henry, and two representatives from Staff Council, Valerie Horne and Tyia Brooks, with Dr. Joachim as chair. Committee actions: developed nomination form. This form will be disseminated via e-mail and will also be accessible on the University Web site.

Nominations could be submitted either by others or by self-nomination. Forms for nomination are to be returned to Tyia Brooks through e-mail or by hard copy. No specific number of people recognized.

The committee discussed the type of event in which the "heroes" are recognized. One suggestion is a luncheon held on a Friday. There was a suggestion of having two levels of award;

Dr. Thames to commission a presidential medal and a plaque.

#### **Cabinet January 9, 2006**

Dr. Thames welcomed everyone back and stated that he always says, "It is not how you started it is how you finish." And he believes that we are going to finish just fine.

Dr. Paul reported that enrollment is 26 1/2 percent down from last year. We are down 3,730 students. He asked that we continue to work hard and encourage students to come back.

Gregg Lassen reported that the phase of tearing down Pine Haven has begun.

#### **4.1.3 Customer Service Training**

USA Funds University will offer a new, customized customer service training on February 7 and 8.

#### **4.1.4 Brochures**

President Horne is not happy with draft copy of our new Staff Council brochure. She has asked David Tisdale and his sister to look at our brochure to give it a more professional appearance. BancorpSouth has agreed to pay for the color brochure to be done. Hopefully they will be back by the end of February. At this time it is not real clear how the Staff Council brochures are being used. We need to make sure they are available to staff members, especially to new hires. These brochures have been handed out at orientation. We need to make sure this is still happening.

#### **4.1.5 Staff Survey**

We have received 220 responses from over 1000 sent. Proudly, we have received a lot of good comments. There are ways we can improve what we do. One thing we need to do is get correct information out to the staff better.

4.2 President Elect - Wynde Fitts - no report

4.3 Secretary's Report - Kim Busche

4.3.1 Call for Proxies

Brad Sumrall by Karen Lott, Scott Carr by Kameron Dale

4.4 Secretary Elect's Report - John Burks

At each meeting we have name cards. Please get yours when you come in.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Filling vacant positions

Katheryn Hood is moving to South Carolina and has resigned from staff council.

5.2 Staff Council Assists Those in Need.

We will send the information to *Update*, *Eagle Eye*, and *Student Printz* about the four Southern Miss Staff and their families that were helped by Staff Council during the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays. We will also include information about helping our fire family. We also need an article written about Staff Council for the *Update*.

6.0 Standing Committees

6.1 Constitution and Bylaws - Ray Stevens

We are moving ahead with our work to include outsourced personnel in staff council. Our primary issue left to work out is how to bring out-sourced personnel to the council. We intend to bring a mechanism to the Staff Council as a whole to solve this issue.

6.2 Legislative - Margaret Firth and John Burks - no report

6.3 Salaries and Benefits - Sharon Hughes & Susan King-no report

6.4 University Relations - Mary Sumrall

We have an update on the payroll drop off that has been set up for the Union. Meri Drago advised that payroll drop off information will go out in this Friday's payroll packets. She will have an employee station for one hour in the Post Office on the Friday's that payroll is dropped off to receive the payroll packets.

6.5 Technology and Training - Donna Donegan

Donna needs to meet with president on several things. Pictures taken at our holiday event will be on our Web site.

## 7.0 Liaison to University committee Reports

### 7.1 Department of Parking Management - Stacey Ready

This committee has not met again.

### 7.2 President's Council - Stacey Ready and Mary Sumrall

Virginia Kittrell will replace Stacey Ready at the next President's Council meeting. Minutes of last meeting have not been approved. Those meetings are open and anyone can attend. They are held in the Union Senate Chambers at 7 a.m.

### 7.3 Wellness program - Susan Bone

John Burks, Greek Life, has offered two wellness programs in his office. They are great! These programs are designed to get good information to a lot of people. There is a great energetic team that comes to your office to help educate our staff. This is a fun and helpful addition to your staff meeting. Financial Aid has also benefited from this.

We have received a card from the Jefferson Family thanking us for our help this past Christmas.

"Get Punched for Wellness" is a new program offered by the Payne Center. Also, there will be a seven-week Tobacco Cessation program available for those who are ready to quit. Wellness Wednesday programs are available again.

We are currently still working on free membership to Payne Center for staff.

Founders' Day is March 30. This is a way to celebrate our university's history. Events will begin at 1:30 p.m. There will be a reception at 3:30 p.m. in The Courtyard next to the new PowerHouse. The PowerHouse will be sampling Gumbo and there will be birthday cake.

We are working on recognizing our 10-, 20-, and 30-year Staff and Faculty during the ceremony. There is not enough time to hold the nomination process for staff awards so that they could be included this year during the ceremony. This is a consideration for next year. Susan met with Mr. Pat Foley of ARAMARK to discuss a sponsorship of the reception by ARAMARK. We need to get our funding request for next year's event ready now so that it can be turned in to Contractual Services early.

### 7.4 IT advisory Board - Virginia Kittrell

The meeting scheduled was canceled

## 8.0 New Business

### 8.1 Election Committee

We need to form our election committee to begin the election process. This committee must prepare an interest inquiry to be sent out to the staff. Then, using the information gained from the survey a ballot will be prepared. Volunteers for this committee were requested. This committee is made up of one person from each EEOC category. Margaret Firth - Clerical, Tony Stringer - technical/para professional, Bob Lowe - Executive/Managerial, Keith Long - Stennis, Keith Mitchell - Skilled Craft, Kameron Dale - professional. The president will appoint those to fill the unfilled positions.

### 8.2 Outsourcing

#### 8.2.1 Media interview - Wynde Fitts

Wynde Fitts, president elect, attended the media interview in December. A last minute call came from Mr. Lassen's office requesting her to talk with the media about the outsourcing of Physical Plant issue. Wynde felt as if the interviewing reporter was trying to get factual information that he couldn't get. It was a hard experience to handle. There wasn't backup of factual data available at the interview. Wynde was interviewed for 30 minutes.

In the second part of the interview that was shown on TV, Mr. Lassen's facial expression and comments of "I refuse to believe this is a negative thing. We are talking about state employees who are not promised a job tomorrow, not tenured faculty." He does not give a very caring impression. This attitude is a problem. The staff, who are expected to help make this a great place to attend school and work, are not being treated as if they matter with statements like these. Several staff have asked what does staff have to do to gain respect and matter to the university administration? Either we have a family feeling on campus as we have in the past or we need to change to a business feeling. As decisions are made, the staff need to know where we stand. We need to be told up front what is expected of staff and what general feeling the university is wanting to give. We all know we are at will employees, but being reminded of it is demeaning. The cost efficiency of outsourcing is important, but if employees are not felt needed, they are not as efficient. There is a challenge with the secrecy of running the university. Most staff would like the full, true story up front, even if it is bad news.

Motion was made by Pam Posey and seconded by Mary Sumrall that a letter be written to Mr. Greg Lassen and the administration to

address the comments made in the interview regarding outsourcing. This letter needs to address our status and the value of staff at the university. General discussion regarding letter content was held. Motion carried by a vote of 19 yes, three no, and one abstain.

### 8.3.2 Outsource Committee members

The Executive Committee met concerning outsourcing. We feel very strongly that members of Staff Council should be part of the committee to work out the major details. President Horne and President Elect Fitts are going to speak with Dr. Thames and Mr. Lassen again about our involvement with this process. We also feel that a review should be set up to see if outsourcing is necessary and to insure that everything is being considered. Right now, the staff does not feel as if our voice matters. The administration needs to clearly know how staff feels about being included in issues concerning the university. As the voice of the staff, Staff Council must be more positively aggressive in vocalizing our care and concern for staff. The written contract is what will affect our staff. This decision is receiving attention from department chairs and deans due to the fact this will directly affect their department budgets. This outsourcing is going to affect each budgeted area of the University.

One area in this process that does not seem to have been covered is institutions that have outsourced and it didn't work. The question was raised about finding out the names of these institutions and speaking with their administration.

Physical plant employees on staff council were asked what the feeling of physical plant staff was at this time? Fear is the main feeling. A majority of the Physical Plant staff feels that the outsourcing of Physical Plant seems to be done deal. Good staff members, that have work knowledge an outside company will not have, are leaving. It will take a few years to replace these workers and this knowledge. Current employees have experience with specialty tasks on campus that people who haven't work here will not know. Several staff would like to know if research has already finished showing the financial plus this would be for the university. If so, why can't that research be made public knowledge?

The question was raised regarding who in physical plant would be outsourced? Is it just the mechanical divisions or would it be all of physical plant? Also, would the coast campuses be affected as well? There was no clear information to answer this question.

The floor was opened for nominations of Staff Council members for the Outsourcing committee. Those nominated where charged, if selected, to help protect the staff interest. Those nominated need to understand not only the workings of physical plant but also have an

understanding of staff benefit needs. Virginia Kittrell, Tonia Shaw, Pam Posey, and Billy Sanders were nominated to be considered as committee members.

## 9.0 Ad Hoc Committee Reports

### 9.1 Scholarship Committee - Virginia Kittrell

The deadline is Wednesday, January 18 for applications to be turned in for the staff scholarship. One item that must be turned in with the application is the receipt of what the reimbursement is being requested to pay for. Please let everyone know who is interested in applying for staff scholarship to help with fees, that if the receipt is not turned in, the application is not considered.

### 9.2 Development Committee - Wynde Fitts

To date we have sold 386 fleeces, which have raised over \$1000 for our scholarship fund and Katrina Relief. We will do a third order. The date to turn in orders will be sent out by e-mail.

The Staff Council thanked Wynde and Michelle Ravisies for heading up and coordinating this project. Job well done!

## 10.0 Announcements

10.1 Executive committee meeting will be scheduled at a later date.

10.2 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday - Monday, January 16, 2006

10.3 Residence Halls open - Thursday, January 12, 2006

10.4 IHL and MASCO meetings - Thursday, January 19, 2006

## 11.0 Adjournment

Motion was made by Melissa Carpenter, and seconded by Wynde Fitts to adjourn. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Busche  
Secretary  
January 2006