

Minutes of August 4, 1999 meeting

2:30 p.m., Union 404 A/B



Attending:

Julie Andrews, Woodson Boyden, Betty Brown, Amy Burrow, Joni Camp, Onice Carter, Mary Chrestman, Buster Clark, Thelma Curry, Cherry Douglas, Shirley Fisher, Judy Fos, Laura Gillom, Clay Jones, Buddy Kahler, Floyd Klepzig, Denise Knighton, Traci Mitchell, Jerry Moore, Conny Parham, Donna Patton, Lamar Pickens, Cassandra Pinson, Lucienne Savell, Sherry Wall, Martha Woolfolk

Excused:

Becky Brown, Mary Harrington, Willie Hilliard, Theresa Knight, Jonnie Manning, Kirk Purdom, Barbara Smith

Unexcused:

Robert Bishop, Dennis Bullard, Etta Miller, Johnny Price, Calvin Sellers

Guests:

Lynn Stewart, Mattsee Spurgeon, Elaine Pugh, Al Fenger, Jim Vinson, Lynnette Johnson, Cynthia Alderman, Melissa Hoskins

The meeting was called to order by President Traci Mitchell. She introduced the speaker, Johnny Williams, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance. Mr. Williams noted that it had been one year since he last spoke to the Council and that he felt it had been a good and successful year. The University had a good year financially, which usually happens when there is a good state economy. He addressed the following issues:

1. Staff Development--Mr. Williams expressed that the staff are the best resource on campus and that we need training to be successful. He is currently considering the results of a survey that was distributed asking Vice Chancellors to ask their departments to report what they are currently doing in the area of staff development, to see who is being missed so that we can do a better job. Many staff members are currently spending a great deal of their time on SAP implementation and much staff development will be a part of Project Discover.
2. VCP/Morris Study--Last year there was a question about this topic, and Mr. Williams committed to making more money available for staff salaries. He thinks we have met or are about to meet the targets that had been set, both for individuals and for groups. But he added that meeting those targets doesn't mean we are where we need to be yet.
3. Project Discover--The project is doing well, including both Project Reengineering and SAP implementation. He thought the Reengineering effort was important, because it would have been a mistake to implement SAP before we broke down the various business processes on campus. This was the real key to success. We are scheduled to go live on financial systems on November 1, and live on Human Resources on January 1, 2000 (moved up from February). Mr. Williams thanked everyone who has worked directly on the project and everyone in their offices who have helped cover those positions during this time.
4. Twice Monthly Paychecks--This change in the payroll system will become effective January 1, 2000. Mr. Williams stressed that this is a complex issue and he does not know all the details. A state law was passed two years ago requiring all state agencies in Mississippi to begin paying employees twice a month with a delay. The law becomes effective for all state universities on January 1, 2001, but the University will begin a year early. About 52% of the University's 5,287 employees (student and non-student) are now being paid monthly with no delay. About 48% are paid biweekly, with about a 7-day delay (every other Friday). The law requires that all employees be paid twice a month, which is not the same as biweekly, and beginning January 1, all University employees will be paid twice a month, on the 15th and 30th/31st(nearest working day).

Other than the law, there are other good reasons to make this change. One is consistency among all employees. To pay without a delay as the University has been doing in many cases is very unusual. Now payroll cuts checks on the 20th-22nd of the month, and must assume what happens until the end of the month regarding employees' leave, etc. But often there is a problem and the University overpays an employee, such as an employee who quits before the end of the month. Payroll/human resources must guess at behavior and this causes some aggravation and some problems.

When SAP planning began, a decision had to be made as to how to configure SAP. The steering committee made the decision then regarding the future, and decided that software needed to be configured this way. Thus when SAP is implemented, the bi-monthly pay plan will also be implemented. There is the possibility that the law will be repealed, but the University could not wait to make this decision, or assume that the law might be repealed. Even if the law is repealed, the University will stick with this decision. Mr. Williams allowed that most people have a personal preference regarding how often they would like to be paid--some prefer monthly, some don't. These preferences will vary from person to person. This change to twice monthly paychecks will require some adjustments such as changing the dates of bankdrafts, etc, and there may be some initial discomfort.

A real issue about which many employees will be concerned is the 7-9 calendar day delay before checks are cut. A delay must be built into the process. For 48% of UM employees, there will be little actual change in how they are paid. But the rest of UM employees may experience some difficulties. In January the transition to this system will require a shortened first pay period:

January 1-7/8 is first pay period--paid on January 15(or last working day)

January 8-22/23 is second pay period--paid on January 30/31(or last working day)

Thus the first paycheck will contain only about one week's pay, due to the implementation of the delay system. To make this more palatable, there will be an option to employees to receive the entire two weeks' pay on January 15, but they must pay back the 1-week delay amount within 7-10 pay periods. This would be accomplished through payroll withholding, with no interest charged.

Several comments and questions were raised regarding the payroll change issue:

- o Lucienne Savell commented that she thought it would be nice to get a check, even a smaller one, in January, since due to early checks in December, there was usually a long wait to get paid at the end of the month.
- o In response to a question, Mr. Williams advised that the current plan is to split deductions evenly between the two payroll checks.
- o Elaine Pugh asked what would happen to employees' money retained by the University due to the delay, and Mr. Williams said he would recommend that the Accounting Department calculate the rough amount of interest that holding the money will create and that the University add that amount to next year's salary pool.
- o Mr. Williams advised that the University has not yet decided how to let employees know the exact transitional amount, but that they would be given that information to help them in deciding which option to take regarding the delay money.
- o In response to a question regarding how overtime would be paid, Mr. Williams advised that overtime would be paid on the check covering the whole week involved.
- o A question was raised about Valic and similar deductions, and Mr. Williams said that probably those would be split evenly between checks.
- o Mr. Williams noted that checks will be deposited in employees' banks just as they are now, on the last working day of each pay period.
- o Details regarding payment of nine month faculty have yet to be finalized, but one improvement will be that faculty will have a choice of nine checks or twelve, beginning in fall 2000.

Mr. Williams emphasized that all of the details of this complex transition have not yet been worked out, but that they have tried to think of every problem, from every angle, to be in compliance with the law and to be fair to UM employees. He realizes that the delay is the toughest problem to overcome and to deal with. He asked all

Staff Council members to help disseminate information regarding the new pay plan. He thinks most employees will like the new plan once they become adjusted to it, and that over time, this will be considered a favorable change. He encourages all staff members to ask questions, because it is difficult to explain all the details of such a complicated change, but asks us to give the change the benefit of the doubt. The University plans to communicate this fall with all staff, providing details, examples, etc, and Mr. Williams will speak to the faculty senate and volunteered to speak to any other groups who ask.

Minutes:

The minutes were approved with two corrections (from unexcused to excused absences).

Project Discover Report:

Buster Clark announced that Onice Carter has been appointed Training Coordinator for SAP implementation, and Larry Armistead has been appointed SAP Consultant. Details will be on the Web by August 15th. Staff should refer questions to Buster Clark, Larry Sparks, and Mary Harrington.

Vanguard:

Mary Chrestman handed out 403B information on Vanguard mutual fund. The University will consider adding Vanguard to our choices for payroll pretax deductions. Vanguard is one of the oldest mutual funds, and has one of the lowest fees. Mary will post more information on the faculty listserv and the staff listserv.

Old Business:

Traci Mitchell displayed a sample of the design of the Staff Council brochure which will be printed in August.

Proposals:

- Higher Education Expense Assistance Proposal: Dr. Kellum has suggested that this proposal might be made a part of the upcoming faculty/staff campaign. Traci Mitchell discussed a similar project which Mississippi State has been working on for about five years, with staff contributing to a staff scholarship fund.
- Staff Development Proposal: This proposal is ready to go to the University Planning Council for consideration.

Announcement was made that Chancellor Khayat will speak to Staff Council on October 1. Staff are requested to forward to the Chancellor or Traci Mitchell any issues or topics in which they are interested.

Last month the Council voted to move the October meeting to Thursday, October 7. Because the Fall Staff Meeting on the previous day will be in the morning, it was requested that the time of the meeting be moved from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Lucienne Savell so moved, Onice Carter seconded, and the motion passed.

A reminder: The Fall University Staff Meeting will be October 6 at 9 a.m.

New Business:

- Staff Council committee assignments have been made. President Mitchell advised that the committee chairs should call the first meeting this month, and should consult with her first as she has some needed information.
- President Mitchell has the list of volunteers for Standing University Committees, including many non-council employees. These appointments have not yet been confirmed.
- MASCO Report: Traci Mitchell and Onice Carter attended MASCO on July 16. Reciprocal tuition is still an issue which is being raised at the MASCO meeting. Another issue raised by the President of USM Staff Council was the possibility of changing the way fringe benefits are handled, with an idea that all fringe benefits would be assigned a dollar value, and employees would have the option of choosing which benefits they wanted. President Mitchell asked the Council and all UM staff to think of the pro's and con's of this issue and reply to her before the next MASCO meeting. MASCO will meet on the University campus on November 11.
- Past President Carter is working on a rough draft of the Staff Council Annual Report and hopes to be able to present the completed report next month.

Committees:

- The Executive Committee met on July 23 to set the agenda for this meeting and met with the Chancellor on August 3. The Committee gave him the results of the Staff Council survey and discussed the goals outlined in that survey. The issue of day care keeps coming up, and President Mitchell suggested that the Staff Council create its own committee to look into this issue.

The committee advised the Chancellor about our participation in Meet/Greet the Students on August 18-19. Council members will wear specially-designed T-shirts, and will hand out Staff Council greeting cards, maps, building code lists, and answer questions and give directions. The Committee discussed with the Chancellor the idea (previously advanced by Provost Staton) of forming a partnership between staff and the Leadership Institute. President Mitchell suggested to the Chancellor that if the Council could get private funding for the Staff Appreciation picnic, that would free up Staff Council budget funds for other projects we would like to pursue. The Chancellor volunteered to help secure funding from private vendors.

The Committee discussed the plans for the Fall Staff Meeting on October 6 with the Chancellor, and he displayed a concept for a Master Plan for the University, concerning saving greenspace and addressing changes to campus, including parking garages, one-way traffic proposal, gates at campus entrances, etc.

- Concerns Committee: Clay Jones reported that some concerns were carried over from last month, all concerning traffic/ticket issues.
 1. In answer to a question regarding where the fine monies paid for tickets goes, Mr. Jones advised that all funds from decal sales go to upkeep on parking spaces, and the \$10 increase funds go to new parking. Ticket money goes to scholarships administered by the Financial Aid Department.
 2. In answer to a question regarding the different hang tags used by some members of the Athletic Department, Mr. Jones received information from Lucienne Savell (UPD) that while some of the hang tags used by Athletics are of a different design, those employees pay the same price for decals as other employees.
 3. Mr. Jones has no response yet to a question regarding why married couples working on campus must pay for two decals.
 4. Regarding an earlier concern about rumors that some other state universities received salary raises in differing amounts than this University, responses from almost all state universities indicated that all followed the same IHL guidelines, with some small variations.

Staff Development Committee: There are two unfinished projects--the survey needs to be reviewed by the newly appointed committee and a summary put together, and the committee will meet again this month regarding a proposed customer service workshop. Clay Jones explained that prior staff development funding was funded by each Vice Chancellor and varied greatly among units. To fund current staff development including computer training sessions, Catch the Ole Miss Sprit workshops, etc. Johnny Williams has agreed to put \$7,000 in the Human Resources Training Fund.

Announcements:

Lucienne Savell advised that a construction fence is being erected for construction on the Chapel and around Bondurant. This will affect parking in those areas, and Magnolia Drive has been divided into one-half staff and one-half student parking to create more staff parking in that area of campus.

Judy Fos advised that she has heard several complaints about the difference in costs for staff parking decals.

President Mitchell reminded Council that the September meeting will be in the Union ballroom.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

/s/Traci Mitchell, President

/s/Clay Jones, President-Elect

/s/Conny Parham, Secretary

Staff Council e-mail address: staffcouncil@olemiss.edu

Staff Council Homepage: http://www.olemiss.edu/orgs/staff_council/

If you are interested in joining the Staff Listserv, please visit the Staff Council Homepage or talk to a Staff Council Representative or send an e-mail message to Majordomo@listserv.olemiss.edu with the words "*subscribe staff*" in the body of the e-mail message.