

# Minutes of February 7, 2001 meeting

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



## PRESENT:

Julie Andrews, Bettie Bey, Joni Camp, Nina Cheshier, Mary Chrestman, Cherry Douglas, Shirley Fisher, Earlene Foster, Shellie Harrison, Melissa Hudson, Buddy Kahler, Anne Klingen, Shannon Lovejoy, Traci Mitchell, Conny Parham, Donna Patton, Dave Sagaser, Tony Seaman, Sherry Wall

## EXCUSED:

Woodson Boyden, Buster Clark, Cherry Douglas, Theresa Knight, Denise Knighton, Jonnie Manning, Janea McDonald, Lynn Mills

## UNEXCUSED:

Betty Brown, Judy Fos, Dino Johnson, Sam Johnson, Michael Vanderlip

President Sherry Wall called the meeting to order. The minutes of the January meeting were approved unanimously. Sherry welcomed two new Council members: Nina Cheshier and Dave Sagaser, both representing EEO category 3.

## Guest Speaker:

- Dr. Maurice Eftink escorted Ms. Amy Whitten to the meeting and took a few minutes to welcome her to the campus. He stated that Provost Carolyn Staton had broken her leg just above the ankle this week and is in the hospital. The Council wishes her a speedy recovery.
- Dr. Eftink stated that the current budget challenge is a storm that we will weather. We will accept the challenges it brings and will come out of it a stronger community.
- Ms. Whitten is an attorney, law professor and management consultant with over 20 years experience. A former Assistant Attorney General for the State of Mississippi and Counsel/Court Administrator to the Mississippi Supreme Court, Ms. Whitten has extensive experience in public sector management and its related legal issues. Governor Ronnie Musgrove appointed her to serve a 12-year term on the Board of Trustees for State Institutions of Higher Learning, a statewide board that oversees Mississippi's universities.
- She began her presentation by stating her belief in the importance of the IHL Board members being visible and representing the interests of their constituents. She believes she was chosen to serve on the IHL Board because:
  1. she has a long-standing connection with the universities;
  2. the Governor was looking for members who understand how the comprehensive universities operate;
  3. she has extensive experience in government.
- She answered what she anticipated to be the first question on everyone's mind regarding the budget: How did we get where we are? All state-wide budgeting is done two years in advance. Sales and income taxes account for 50% of state revenue. The problem came because two years ago the state projected "x" amount of funds to be collected and we spent too optimistically. She anticipates that it will take 2-3 years to get back on cycle. It costs \$11.9 million to give all state employees a 1% raise.
- Her perceptions of the current IHL Board members:
  - A. They are committed to do whatever is necessary to get every dollar possible for the universities. She stated that Jack Gordon, Senate Appropriations Chairman, wrote a letter to each Board member stating their commitment to provide funding to prevent anyone from losing their job.
  - B. They are committed to:
    1. backing up each president/chancellor to handle the operations of their respective institution as they see fit;

2. making sure anything needed at the Board level is done and done quickly;
  3. trying to identify procedures at the Board level that might cause delays or hinder the presidents/chancellors so these can be corrected;
  4. if the budget challenge should get to the point of lay-offs, the Board will go to the Governor to seek alternative funding. They are committed to accomplishing the cuts without anyone losing his/her job.
- She stated that K-12 teachers will get a raise this year as the last part of a phased-in three-year promised raise. Any raises from here on will be tied to the 5% growth rate of the state's economy.
  - State agencies have been asked to search for any federal dollars that are available to help offset some of the state funding.
  - Health care is an important issue. One of the problems is that we are in the same pool with the retirees. One possible way to bring down premiums is to separate active employees from the retirees since the number of claims increases for retirees. (A Council member pointed out that one cause for this rise is that there is no preventive medicine options provided in our current insurance; therefore, employees do not go to the doctor to keep themselves healthy. Consequently, this results in more and greater health problems after retirement.) She also reminded us that when employees are hit with a premium increase for dependent coverage, the universities are hit with that same increase for each employee.
  - The legislators are looking at all revenue areas including sales tax and income tax.
  - She stated that the Board will look at each university to see what amount of tuition increase is tolerable on that campus.
  - A question was asked about early-retirement incentives. She said that was not something IHL could do; it requires state-wide authority.
  - Ms. Whitten was asked to comment on the changes in the composition of the IHL Board. She stated that at her first meeting in May, 2000, she was disturbed by the treatment of the presidents during the meeting. She believes that has been improved. There is a stronger trust factor. They are committed to setting the policy and letting the CEO of each university do their jobs. The IHL Board does not want to be micro-managers. They also believe that the Universities' foundations are privately-funded organizations and that the IHL Board should not be involved in their policies or procedures.
  - She concluded by asking that anyone with questions, concerns, or suggestions, e-mail them to her at [whitten@watervalley.net](mailto:whitten@watervalley.net).

## Committee Reports:

- Sherry Wall gave a report on the Executive Committee's meeting with the Chancellor which consisted mostly of a discussion on the current budget challenge. The Chancellor is committed to handling the cuts without any jobs being lost. The vice chancellors, deans, and directors are being asked to work out the cuts using vacant positions, etc. Only critical vacant positions will be filled, after administrators agree that a particular position is critical. They are aggressively seeking other revenue sources. We really won't know about the 2002 budget until April after the legislative session ends in March. The University will be asking for a tuition increase. The Chancellor stated that every department will be asked to eliminate non-essential functions. Dr. Khayat used some of the social functions that his office sponsors as an example. Another example is the extremely-high cost of advertising for positions in the Chronical of Higher Education, and other publications. A campaign is being undertaken to raise private funds to replace scholarship funds which are currently being generated by state funds. This would free up the state funds for other purposes. He stressed that employees not worry for the sake of worry. Try to assist by suggesting ways to save money or make better use of our resources.
- Conny Parham stated that letters have gone out asking staff if they wish their name to be placed on the Staff Council ballot for next year. Sherry thanked Conny Parham, Anne Klingen, and Melissa Hudson for serving on this important committee.
- Buddy Kahler reported on several concerns:

1. One employee wrote to him about an arbitrary pay increase for one person in their department. After checking into it, Buddy learned that the pay increase was due to an increase in everyone's pay who did not currently make at least \$6.82 per hour.
  2. A concern was expressed about a sign behind Shoemaker Hall that reserved that space for Physical Plant employees. Buddy went down there, saw an old rusty sign and removed it.
  3. A staff member stated that even though there are only about four employees in her department, they receive about a dozen copies of *Inside Ole Miss* each week. This seemed wasteful to the employee. Buddy contacted University Communication and learned that the time involved in putting labels on each publication was expensive; therefore, the decision was made to send a stack to each department. However, they are looking for suggestions to help distribute these in a timely and efficient manner.
    - This same staff member stated that since she has a deduction to the Credit Union each pay period, she receives two payroll stubs in two separate window envelopes. She suggested that if these could be put in the same envelope, it would save the University money. Al Fenger in Payroll stated that they are looking at this system to see if there are alternative ways to distribute the stubs.
    - A council member stated that she has a monthly payroll deduction to the Foundation for a \$10 contribution. Each month she gets a receipt for the \$10. She feels that since the contribution is listed on her payroll stub each pay period, her donation could be better spent on the intended use without using it to pay for an employee's time, mailing cost and printing costs of sending her a receipt every month. Perhaps a solution would be to mail one statement at the end of each year for tax purposes.
  4. An employee stated that her children were not getting the discount rates for multiple children in the Homework Club. Buddy Kahler checked with Tim Angle and found that "multiple children", in this case, means 3 or more children. Since the employee only has two children, she does not qualify for the multiple children discount.
- A report on a meeting of the Staff Appreciation Committee this week -- This is a standing committee appointed by the Chancellor. This year, there will be a staff appreciation day on Friday, May 18th beginning with the staff awards ceremony at 9:00 a.m. at Fulton Chapel, followed by the picnic from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Johnny Williams agreed to find funds to cater the meal and provide servers so that no employee or administrator has to serve. Campus Recreation will be asked to provide games and entertainment from 1:00p.m. to 3 p.m. (Sandra Crowe, a member of the Standing Committee, agreed to work with Campus Recreation on this part of the day). Staff Council will be in charge of the outstanding staff awards and the awards ceremony as in the past. Sherry asked for volunteers to help on those committees. Anne Kligen agreed to work on a flyer to send to the committee to be printed and mailed out regarding the activities of the day. There will be no door prizes this year.

## **Announcements:**

- The University will host the MASCO (Mississippi Association of Staff Council Officers) meeting on March 15 from 10:00-3:00.
- The University Faculty Senate Association (the equivalent of the MASCO but for faculty senate) is holding a rally in Jackson on February 27 at 2:00 p.m. at the Capitol. They are encouraging faculty, staff, and students to express their concerns to legislature regarding the budget situation. After discussion, Anne Kligen made a motion that our Staff Council not participate in this rally. Conny Parham seconded and the motion carried unanimously. The reasoning was that the budget cuts were not something that was aimed at universities, and that this rally could cause negative rather than positive responses. Sherry did remind everyone that we, as individuals, can certainly participate as we wish
- 
- The Law School students will sponsor a drive to inform faculty and staff whose children are not insured about the CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program). They will be contacting departments the week of February 12

and they will also have a table set up in the Union Lobby. Anyone desiring more information about CHIP should contact Dr. Larry Bush at 6843

- Mary Chrestman announced that there is no treasurer's report because budget statements have not been run since the last meeting.

**The March meeting is scheduled for March 7th, at 2:30 p.m.**

The meeting was adjourned.

/s/Sherry Wall, President

/s/Buddy Kahler, President-Elect

/s/Jonnie Manning, Secretary

**P.S. The Council wishes to thank Donna Patton for graciously taking the minutes of today's meeting in Jonnie Manning's absence.**

Staff Council e-mail address: [staffcouncil@olemiss.edu](mailto:staffcouncil@olemiss.edu)

Staff Council Homepage: [http://www.olemiss.edu/orgs/staff\\_council/](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](mailto:Majordomo@listserv.olemiss.edu) with the words "*subscribe staff*" in the body of the e-mail message.