

The University of Mississippi
Minutes of the Meeting, January 5, 2005

Staff Council
405 Union

Present: James Akey; Brenda Brannan; Joey Brent; Judy Fos; Corrie Free; Kathy Grace; Mary Harrington; Carra Hewitt; Jeff Howell; Melissa Hudson; Ron Kitchens; Shannon Lovejoy; Judy Mills; Jennifer Pardoe; Paula Park; Deidra Phillips; Randall Pinion; Bettie Puckett; Tony Seaman; Patti Welch

Excused: Hilarie Bain; Shannon Beeman; Debbie Bishop; Rachel Bost; Nina Cheshier; Shellie Harrison; Buddy Kahler; Ardessa Minor; Traci Mitchell

Unexcused: Pam Barefield; Kim Chrestman; Sue Hodge; Renee Moore; Kathy Sanders

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 2:35 pm by President Mary Harrington. President Harrington thanked all members for attending, and then introduced Onice Carter of the Mississippi Federal Credit Union as the guest speaker. Ms. Carter discussed some of the programs and services offered by the Credit Union, such as savings accounts, checking accounts, and the Holiday Club. Faculty, staff, and students are eligible to become members of the Credit Union. To become a member, one must open a Shares (Savings) Account with a minimum deposit of \$26.00, and maintain a balance of at least \$25.00 to remain active. Currently, the Credit Union (located in the Student Union) has over 1,000 members, including students. Ms. Carter distributed a handout that further described the Credit Unions programs and services.

Introduction of New Member: President Harrington introduced new Staff Council member Kathy Grace, who has replaced Paige Davis. Ms. Grace has worked full-time on campus since 1996, and is currently employed at MMRI.

Approval of Minutes: The December minutes were approved with no corrections.

Treasurer's Report: Most of the expenditures incurred in December were associated with the MASCO meeting in Jackson and the Holiday Celebration. No changes were made to the overhead account or the textbook scholarship account. The Treasurer's Report was approved with no corrections.

Committee Reports:

- President Harrington thanked Tony Seaman and Paula Park for their work in coordinating the Staff Holiday Celebration, and stated that she had received many comments from staff on how wonderful it was to relax and mingle with friends during the busy holiday season. Mr. Seaman added that the program was far more successful than anticipated; approximately 400 staff members participated.
- Judy Fos, coordinator of New Employee Orientation, reported that the Staff Council letter to new staff is ready to be mailed, along with a coupon for a complimentary mug and a list of current Council members. The initial mailing will go to staff hired between October 13, 2004 and November 30, 2004.
- Ms. Fos, who is also chair of the Staff Council Elections Committee, reported that she anticipates the Council will need to elect 15 new members in the upcoming election: four members in EEO Category 3; two members in EEO Category 4; two members in EEO Category 5; 1 member in EEO Category 6; five members in EEO Category 7; and one at-large member. Candidate solicitations will be mailed/emailed on January 7, 2005 and will be due back by 5:00 pm on January 14, 2005. Ballots will be mailed as soon as possible after January 14. Since terms typically run from March 1 through February 28, the first meeting at which new members will be present will be on March 2, 2005. Jeff Howell asked about the possibility of having staff members vote electronically through Online Services, using their web IDs. The Council agreed to further explore this possibility. Jennifer Pardoe, coordinator of the Publicity Committee, agreed to pursue placing an announcement in *Inside Ole Miss* to encourage people to run for Staff Council and to vote in the election.
- The Executive Committee did not meet with Chancellor Khayat this month, due to the holiday break.
- Other Committee Reports: Judy Fos reported that two applications have been submitted to the Friends of the Children Fund. This fund has been established to provide financial support (transportation, food, and lodging) to

Ole Miss faculty, staff, and students who are parents of critically ill children.

New Business:

- President Harrington asked the Council for suggestions on meeting places and guest speakers for April, May, and June. Possible locations include the new indoor practice facility, the Performing Arts Center, and the National Food Service Management Institute. Suggestions for guest speakers may be emailed to President Harrington at cmmary@olemiss.edu.
- In addition, President Harrington asked Council members to come up with ideas for additional projects. She stated that the Council has done a great job this year of promoting its programs and services, and stressed the need to keep this momentum going.

Concerns:

- Joey Brent reported that on July 1, 2004, a new Human Resources policy went into effect stating that any staff member who teaches a class during normal hours will not be compensated for teaching, unless he/she takes time off from work to do so. Several staff members were not made aware of this policy when it was instituted, and are now concerned that they will not be compensated for teaching and that their leave time will be docked for the time they spend teaching. University Attorney Lee Tyner is investigating the situation, and one of the staff members affected by the policy is scheduled to meet with Clay Jones in Human Resources. After deliberation, the Staff Council agreed to table discussion of the issue until next month, when more information is available from the University Attorney's office and Human Resources.
- Several Staff Council members voiced their concerns regarding on-line orientation for new staff: staff may not really get the information they need to make informed decisions about benefits; computer access is not universal on campus; and the online process is too impersonal—new staff have no opportunity to network or get questions answered. Judy Fos added that, even though Human Resources offers computer access and individual assistance with orientation, some new staff might feel uncomfortable asking for help. After discussion, the Staff Council decided to do an informal survey of new staff members hired between October 15, 2004 and November 30, 2004 to determine the effectiveness of online orientation. Council members volunteered to contact these new staff. Deidre Phillips agreed to compile a list of questions to be asked, and will email these to the volunteers. President Harrington asked that volunteers make these contacts prior to the next meeting so that discussion can continue at that time.
- Several issues regarding textbook scholarships were discussed. Melissa Hudson stated that she had been forwarded an email from a staff member questioning the salary cap of \$50,000. Tony Seaman stated that the salary cap was set at \$50,000 because there are more people on campus who make less than \$50,000 than there are who make more than that amount, and it is staff with lesser incomes that the Council is trying to help. The textbook scholarship is not intended to be an entitlement; it is intended to help people who otherwise might not be able to attend classes. In addition, the salary cap initially started at \$18,000 per year, but has been raised over the years to help more staff.

The Council again debated the feasibility of selling textbooks back to the Bookstore and reimbursing the money to the textbook scholarship fund. Because the Bookstore cannot put scholarship funds into a designated account, all refunds would have to be processed in cash or on credit cards. Therefore, staff would be returning money on an honor or volunteer basis only. While collecting refunds would show that the Council is trying to be a good steward of the money it receives for textbook scholarships, policing refunds would be difficult. However, the Council will further investigate the idea of asking staff to voluntarily return books to reimburse the fund.

Melissa Hudson stated that some staff members are again requesting a window of time strictly for staff registration. President Harrington reminded everyone that faculty and staff are eligible to take classes on a space available basis; taking classes is a privilege, not a right.

Announcements:

- In appreciation for his work in coordinating the Holiday Celebration, Tony Seaman has been named Staff Council Member of the Month for January.
- The next Staff Council meeting will be held on February 2, 2005 in the Gertrude Ford Performing Arts Center.

Meeting adjourned, 4:00 pm.

/s/ Mary Harrington, President

/s/ Joey Brent, President-Elect

/s/ Shannon Beeman, Secretary

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