

The University of Mississippi

Minutes of the Meeting, June 2, 2004

Staff Council

Union 404 A & B

Present: James Akey; Shannon Beeman; Rachel Bost; Joey Brent; Joni Camp; Nina Cheshier; Kim Chrestman; Corrie Free; Shellie Harrison; Carra Hewitt; Melissa Hudson; Buddy Kahler; Ron Kitchens; Shannon Lovejoy; Traci Mitchell; Jennifer Pardoe; Deidre Phillips; Randall Pinion; Tony Seaman; Patti Welch

Excused: Hilarie Bain; Brenda Brannan; Paige Davis; Judy Fos; Mary Harrington; Paula Park; Bettie Puckett

Unexcused: Tiffany Edwards; Sue Hodge; Barbara Leeton; Ardessa Minor; Renee Moore; Kathy Sanders; Gina Starnes

Call to Order: At 2:35 pm, President Joni Camp called the meeting to order by welcoming all Staff Council members, and thanked Council members for their service during her tenure as Staff Council President. President Camp then introduced guest speaker Andy Mullins, who serves as Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, State/Federal Institutional Liaison, and Mississippi Legislature Liaison. Dr. Mullins spoke about the recent legislative session, which he stated was a very unusual session for many reasons:

1. The state government is running out of money, but does not plan to raise taxes. The Governor has stated that he will veto any proposed tax increase. State legislators are reluctant to put themselves on the line to override the Governor's veto in order to pass any tax increases. Ultimately, legislators took one-time contributions of \$240 million from the tobacco trust fund and \$230 million from casino funds in order to balance the state budget. Next year, funds must be found from other sources if the economy does not improve. If the economy improves, monies will be generated. Legislators may increase their efforts to raise taxes next year.

Despite current budget woes, state universities were treated fairly well. Overall, the general operating budgets of institutions were not cut but were increased to to cover the employers' portion of insurance costs. Some of the University's line items were decreased, such as the Small Business Development Center, RIPS, the Mississippi Mineral Resource Institute, the Supercomputer Center, and the Law Research Institute. Dr. Mullins stated that in the future he will be working to have line items collapsed into the general budget so that the University can have more control over its budget.

Although universities fared well, K-12 was cut significantly. Districts must meet an unfunded mandate to raise teacher salaries. Thus, Mississippians may see local taxes increase as the state passes the cost of education down to the local level.

2. Dr. Mullins stated that health insurance continues to be a major concern. The state has covered the cost of health insurance only through January 2005. Legislators are making a bona fide effort to keep costs down and improve services. However, all staff recently received notice of health insurance increases. The costs will go up significantly for family coverage. Deductibles will inevitably increase, but it is not yet known by how much. To help offset the costs of health care, the University continues to offer \$25.00 physicals to faculty and staff through the Health Center.

3. The IHL Board has been asked for a 5% tuition increase, plus discretion to raise tuition again at a later date, in order to fund raises for faculty and staff. The state legislators did not allow funding for raises this year. Dr. Mullins stated that while some Board members do not approve of tuition increases, the Board likely will pass the increases anyway. The IHL Board is scheduled to meet on June 17th.

4. No bond bill was passed this year for the first time in ten years. All bond money for state government was lumped in one bill. The issue became very political, and the bond bill died. Over the past nine years, Ole Miss has witnessed \$270 million of construction. Dr. Mullins stated that it is important to have an annual bond bill passed each year so that money can be earmarked for improvements. Losing a year will throw the University behind.

5. Regarding retirement, PERS operated in the red last year. Contributions were down, while expenditures increased.

President Camp thanked Dr. Mullins for his willingness to speak to the Staff Council about these important issues.

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

Treasurer's Report: Rachel Bost reported that most of the expenses incurred over the last month were related to Staff Appreciation Day. Expenditures totaling \$849.09 were made in contractual services to cover rental of the karaoke machine, set up of the sound system for the staff band, and plaques for the Outstanding Staff Member awards. \$2216.37 was spent in commodities to cover Staff Council t-shirts, printing costs, gifts for employees with 30+ years of service, and door prizes. An additional \$363.22 was spent to cover textbook scholarships during Intersession. The treasurer's report was approved with no corrections.

Old Business:

- President Camp thanked everyone for helping to make Staff Appreciation Day a success, and extended special thanks to the Physical Plant, Printing Services, and the Ole Miss Open Doors Staff Band.
- Newly elected officers who will begin their terms in July are: Mary Harrington, President; Joey Brent, President-Elect; Rachel Bost, Treasurer; Shannon Beeman, Secretary. Since Joni Camp is retiring, the position of Immediate Past President will be vacant.

New Business:

- This year's Outstanding Staff Member Awards are as follows:
 - Outstanding Staff EEOC Category Winners
 - EEO1 – Dr. Bonnie Buntin
 - EEO3 – Onice Carter
 - EEO4 – Marilyn Elizabeth Allen
 - EEO5 – Michael Myrick
 - EEO6 – Keith Brown
 - EEO7 – Felix Buford
 - Overall Outstanding Winner – Larry Austin
- Rachel Bost presented a plaque to Joni Camp in recognition of her outstanding service as Staff Council President for 2003-2004.

Committee Reports:

- Kim Chrestman reported that the Staff Appreciation Day Blood Drive went very well. Thirty-six donors came to give blood. Ms. Chrestman thanked all volunteers for helping with the program.

Next Meeting: The next Staff Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 7.

Meeting adjourned, 3:40 pm.

/s/ Joni Camp, President

/s/ Mary Harrington, President-Elect

/s/ Shannon Beeman, Secretary

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