

Minutes of September 1, 1999 meeting

2:30 p.m., Union Ballroom



Attending:

Julie Andrews, Robert Bishop, Woodson Boyden, Betty Brown, Amy Burrow, Joni Camp, Mary Chrestman, Thelma Curry, Cherry Douglas, Shirley Fisher, Judy Fos, Laura Gillom, Mary Harrington, Willie Hilliard, Clay Jones, Buddy Kahler, Floyd Klepzig, Theresa Knight, Denise Knighton, Jonnie Manning, Etta Miller, Traci Mitchell, Jerry Moore, Conny Parham, Donna Patton, Lamar Pickens, Cassandra Pinson, Kirk Purdom, Lucienne Savell, Barbara Smith, Sherry Wall, Martha Woolfolk

Excused:

Onice Carter

Unexcused:

Dennis Bullard, Michael Vanderlip

Guests:

Melissa Hoskins, Dianne Dillman, Melanie Wadkins, and several others.

The meeting was called to order by President Traci Mitchell, who welcomed the guests and made a few comments about the purpose and activities of the Council.

- She announced that about 50 staff volunteers had participated in the Meet and Greet Project during the first days of fall classes and that there was good response from the students.
- December 8 has been scheduled as the date for the third annual late night exam breakfast sponsored by the Staff Council.
- We have representation on Standing University Committees, on Administrative Council, and on all administrative search committees.
- The Council belongs to MASCO, where representatives from all eight Mississippi Universities meet every other month to discuss issues of interest and concern. Our Council will be hosting the MASCO meeting on November 11.

Guest Speaker

Traci introduced the speaker, Chancellor Robert Khayat, and thanked him for his commitment to and support of the staff and for his efforts in securing funding for the generous staff salary increases this year. These increases bring us closer to being able to offer competitive salaries in order to keep and recruit outstanding staff.

Chancellor Khayat proposed to make a few general observations about where we are and where we hope to be and then have a question/answer session. He introduced Vice Chancellors Gloria Kellum and Johnny Williams, and Larry Sparks, leader of Project Discover, who were present to assist in answering any detailed questions that might arise.

One constant theme that the Chancellor has stressed since he took the job is that every person on campus plays a significant role in the success of the University, and that no position is any more important than any other. Another important theme the Chancellor has emphasized is that the University is a community for the common purpose of providing quality education for students. From the entrances of the University to the library, everything is aimed at creating optimum conditions for students to be successful.

When Robert Khayat assumed the role of Chancellor in 1995, there had been four years of declining enrollment (7%), cost of operations had increased 29%, salaries and wages were flat, and buildings were in disrepair. But since that

time, several factors have come together to have a major impact on the University.

1. The national economy is at its highest level in years. This has translated into strong support for education at the highest levels of leadership. Some examples include the Natural Products Center, the National Food Service management Institute and the Wetlands Project.
2. The state's economy is thriving and the legislature is committed to the support of education. Each year since 1995 there has been increased legislative support, with 3% salary increases in 1997 and 1998 and a 7.5% increase in 1999. The University has also received \$85 million for building improvements, with an additional \$85 million committed for that purpose during the next few years.
3. Faculty, staff and students are ready to come together to make the University successful and to go forward.
4. The level of alumni/friends support has increased significantly, not only financially but with other kinds of support as well. The Campaign has received \$170 million to date and there is heavy involvement by alumni who recruit and who come on campus to offer support and expertise for University projects.

All of these factors have come together to help us move forward. We are now focused on efficiency. A private gift enabled the University to go ahead with Project Discover, which will help us to provide the greatest level of service at the lowest cost in the most efficient manner. All the members of the Project Discover team have taken on those responsibilities over and above their regular duties. It is a staff-led and staff-driven project which will facilitate a change in how we do business. One value built into the system is self-determination, to encourage staff and faculty to initiate improvements in functions and processes and to be creative.

The Chancellor provided some comments and updates on some specific staff issues discussed in the past:

1. **Compensation levels.** We have met the goals of the VCP plan and hope to meet the goal of competitive market salaries in the future. We want to retain and attract the best people for jobs on campus. While no one can predict what the new legislature will do next year, it appears that those who are emerging as leaders are all pro-education. The Chancellor is optimistic that if the economy continues to be strong, the attitude of the legislature should continue to be supportive of education.
2. The University will continue emphasizing **staff development**, with Johnny Williams, Carolyn Staton and Gloria Kellum working to move forward in that area.
3. **Day Care Center.** The Chancellor acknowledges that there is a lot of interest, and that we will have to continue to work on this goal. He soon hopes to have someone delegated to focus on this project.

The Chancellor emphasized the need to stay focused. We can see the progress of the last four years, but we need to stay united, and he believes that open, frequent and honest communication is very important.. The Chancellor hopes that we will accept the challenge to be "servant leaders", those who serve as leaders and reach out to others. He feels good about the University because of its people, and he believes that this is what sets us apart. We have an emotional investment in each other, and he hopes that will continue.

The Chancellor then opened the meeting to questions, again noting that Gloria Kellum and Johnny Williams would respond if needed.

- Traci Mitchell noted that when Carolyn Staton spoke to the Council in July, she mentioned the possibility of a partnership between the Staff Council and the Leadership Institute. The Chancellor responded that he feels there is a natural connection between the staff and leadership roles, but this relationship has not yet been formalized--the Institute would do that.
- Ron Kitchens asked about the status of the Education Building and the Performing Arts Center. The Chancellor replied that there would be 550 parking spaces for the 1200-seat Arts Center. Site preparation is in progress now, with completion of the Center set for 2001. The Center will cost \$23 million and is being funded by private and state funds. A parking lot is being built, with half the space opening soon and the other half being used as a staging area for construction. Long term plans include moving the School of Education to Guyton Hall and moving the Music Department to the current Education Building. The old gymnasium would eventually become the Band Hall.

- Lucienne Savell asked about classroom buildings and other projects. The Chancellor advised that the Lyceum project is about 18 months from completion and that the Y Building is expected to be completed this December. The Chapel is expected to take 18-24 months to complete and renovation of Bondurant should follow. After that, several dormitories, LaBauve, Deupree and Odom are scheduled for renovation if state funding is available.
- Amy Burrow asked for the Chancellor's thoughts on the scheduled twice-a-month payroll change. The Chancellor replied that we are creatures of the legislature and that this change was legislatively mandated. The University is implementing the change one year earlier than required because of Project Discover. The Chancellor noted that staff have worked hard to make this transition and that change always causes stress and discomfort. Johnny Williams and his group have prepared a detailed explanation of the changes to the process and a memorandum will be distributed to the employees within a few days which should help clear up most of the confusion.
- Jonnie Manning referred to an article in a recent *Oxford Eagle* article which mentioned new highway grants which would create a connection between Jackson Avenue and Highway 6. The Chancellor advised that the University and the City are in the process of negotiating the sale of railroad right-of-way property, which would allow a connection from Molly Barr Road to the 6 Bypass. This acquisition would also facilitate enlargement of the airport to accommodate larger planes.
- In response to a question about parking, the Chancellor said that traffic consultants and campus planners have been looking at the problems and suggesting ideas and solutions. One recommendation involves three multi-level parking garages to be located near the stadium, behind Turner Center and near Deaton. These are expensive proposals and funding is the primary problem. The Chancellor noted that parking is a challenge on all college campuses.
- A question was asked regarding consideration of a bus system, and the Chancellor said that after a study was made of this idea, it was not recommended for this campus. Instead the University was advised to change to an interior pedestrian campus and implement a one-way traffic system. He is primarily concerned with the safety, function and beauty of the campus. He noted that following a recent ten-year SACS reaccreditation study, the University received four commendations, including one for the appearance of the buildings and grounds. Such commendations are very rare.
- In response to a question regarding moving the Physical Plant, the Chancellor replied that there are plans to move the shops. The main goal is to relocate to the edge of campus, to facilitate deliveries, shipping and receiving. The most probable location would be somewhere near the soccer fields, in the southwest part of campus. But this is a very expensive project, and there is no schedule or timetable as yet, because we are waiting on funding.
- Judy Fos mentioned she had received questions regarding the increase in parking decal prices. Lucienne Savell responded that the Student Parking Committee had decided to raise the price of student decals to \$35 to generate more funds for parking facilities, and the University followed suit for faculty/staff, with the exception that those who were paid less than \$15,000/year would not be assessed the increase. The Chancellor noted that compared to other universities, our parking fees are very low, and that by recognizing the differential fees for lower paid employees, we are demonstrating compassion. Amy Burrow asked why we cannot charge students more for their parking tickets when they continually park illegally, and the Chancellor replied that there really was no good answer to this problem.

In closing, the Chancellor said he believes that every person needs something to do, to love and to hope for. The University offers us this, and he looks forward to our future together.

Minutes

The minutes of the August, 1999, meeting should be corrected to show which Council members were changed from unexcused to excused absences. Those members were Becky Brown and Martha Woolfolk. The corrected minutes were approved.

Old Business

- **Project Discover.** Buster Clark mentioned that the explanatory memorandum regarding the January, 2000, change in the payroll process was currently in campus mail. He announced that Onice Carter is in the process of setting up training schedules for SAP implementation and that anyone who will be using SAP will be trained. The training sessions will start later in September.
- **Publicity Committee.** Traci Mitchell displayed the new Staff Council brochure and commended Woodson Boyden and her committee for their efforts. The brochure will be distributed at the Catch the Ole Miss Spirit orientation sessions. Traci noted that a suggestion had been made to mail the brochures to all staff, but that the cost would be about \$300. Amy Burrow suggested putting one copy on each departmental bulletin board or handing the brochures out at the Fall Staff Meeting. After some discussion, it was decided to distribute the brochure at the Fall Staff Meeting September 28.
- **Staff Development.** Traci advised that copies of the proposal regarding permanent funding of Staff Development were available and requested that Council members read the proposal and return to her by Friday, September 3, with any suggestions or corrections. The proposal will be submitted to the University Planning Council at its next meeting.
- Traci noted that the results of the recent Staff Council Survey showed several goals for the Council and she asked the members to select 4-5 goals to target this year. The goals mentioned most often in the survey were the following:
 1. Secure higher salaries and salary upgrades
 2. Provide leadership training for all staff
 3. Focus on staff development
 4. Day Care--Clay Jones has agreed to chair a committee on day care to help keep the issue open.
- Traci announced that the Staff Development Committee is formulating a plan for campus wide workshops on customer service this year. A motion to adopt the above goals was made and passed.

Announcements

The Staff Council meeting for October will be on **October 7** at 2:30 p.m. (**this is Thursday instead of the usual Wednesday meeting**).

The Fall Staff meeting will be held September 28 at 9:00 a.m. in Fulton Chapel.

The University is updating its Web Page and asked for staff suggestions regarding the staff button. Some items mentioned were

Staff Council

Standing Committees

Staff Mailing List

Human Resources

Information Services

University Calendar

Any staff members with other suggestions or ideas should forward them to Traci Mitchell.

Onice Carter has prepared last year's Annual Report and copies are available. Copies will be distributed to all members at next month's meeting.

Committee Reports

- **Executive Committee.** Staff Council officers met with the Chancellor, and Vice Chancellors Kellum, Staton and Williams on September 1 for lunch. Items discussed included the Day Care Center Committee, the status of funding for the Staff Appreciation picnic, an update on the proposed Customer Service Workshops, and a discussion of a suggestion regarding casual Fridays on campus. The Chancellor said he encourages feedback on the implementation of the payroll change.

Amy Burrow said she has heard many complaints about the change in the payroll process and that the law could still be repealed. Mary Chrestman advised that the Mississippi Code contains the mandated change and that is the current law. There was a great deal of discussion about the payroll change, including the timing of the announcement, rumors, etc. Traci Mitchell encouraged Staff Council members to bring forward any comments, complaints and questions from staff so that she can take them forward to be considered.

- **Concerns Committee.** Clay Jones discussed these concerns:
 - a. A question had been raised regarding the decision of the Physical Plant to no longer allow employees to have framing done by the Carpentry Shop. The response was that Project Discover's finding was that this was not a mission of the PPD. Additionally, this private work had created a problematic tax situation, since it involved income to the PPD.
 - b. A suggestion was made that a new crosswalk be created at the entrance to Martindale, across from the Athletic Office Building. According to PPD engineers, such a crosswalk is scheduled to be painted soon.
 - c. A question had been sent forward concerning the use of answering machines on campus. Onice Carter will get that information and respond at the next meeting.
 - d. Traci noted that a concern had been raised by a student who e-mailed the Council regarding underage alcohol consumption on campus. The student had proposed no ads be allowed in *The Daily Mississippian* regarding alcohol consumption. Jonnie Manning noted that the Chancellor had appointed a Task Force on Binge Drinking and they would be meeting in the near future. There was some discussion of this issue, including free speech/press concerns and whether it would be appropriate for Staff Council to take such a position, and no motion was made.
- **Legislative Committee.** Mary Chrestman reported that the committee had met and drafted letters to administrators, local legislators and Lt. Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, thanking them for allocating funding for faculty/staff raises. Mary asked for feedback on the letter before it is sent.
- **Publicity Committee.** Floyd Klepzig reported that the committee had contacted *The Daily Mississippian*, *The Oxford Eagle* and *Good Things Are Happening at Ole Miss* regarding the staff council meetings. They are updating current events on the calendar on the Web Page and on the Staff Council home page. There currently is a journalism student writing an article about staff council which will probably be published.
- **Staff Development.** Clay Jones reported that Human Resources staff are going through the staff development surveys submitted by the Vice Chancellors and will have the survey results next month. They are also working on the customer service workshops.

Other Business

Traci repeated that staff volunteers will be needed for the exam night breakfast to be held on December 8. At the November Staff Council meeting, no speaker is scheduled--we will have a business meeting only and a group photo will be taken.

Floyd Klepzig asked if Staff Council should consider doing a community service project, since service is a part of the University's mission, and there was some discussion of that issue.

Clay Jones asked for volunteers for the Day Care committee. He also announced that departments will need to have their leave records updated and prepared through December 1999 Human Resources will be collecting and auditing those records in preparation for the implementation of SAP. Leave records will be kept electronically beginning January 1, 2000, with leave information being recorded each pay period (twice a month). It will be up to individual departments as to how to implement.

As the meeting was running very long, it was decided to adjourn. Further business will be taken up at the October meeting.

/s/Onice Carter, President

/s/Traci Mitchell, President-Elect

/s/Donna Patton, 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.