

Staff Senate Meeting
Thursday, October 17, 2002
9 a.m.
Dean B. Ellis Library, 8th Floor Boardroom

Senators Present: Carol Barnhill, Sandra Bramblett, Barbara Coker, Laura Cremeens, Carolyn Douglas, Beth Ephlin, Donna Kirksey for Tami Freeman, Janet Hardin, Victor Hill, Philip Jackson, Sharon Lee, Judy McCay, Randy Martin, Vic Nelson, Carolyn Reece, Mike Rippy, David Handwork for Lanny Tinker, Margie Vaughn

Absent: Tami Freeman (proxy), Donna McMillin, Hope Phillips (on leave), Elaine Poynter

Agenda

1. **Call to order.** The meeting was called to order by President Jackson at 9 a.m.
2. **Approval of minutes from September 19 meeting.** The September 19 minutes were changed to indicate that Randy Martin was present.
Motion to accept minutes with change - Senator Hill
Second - Senator Poynter
Vote - Unanimously approved
3. **Treasurer's report.** Treasurer Douglas reported the following balances in Staff Senate accounts:
 - a. Staff Senate Discretionary Account - \$2,505.97
 - b. Santa's Tribe ASU Account - \$1,058.65
 - c. Staff Senate Account - \$2,657.80

The customary reporting of Santa's Tribe ASU Foundation account balance was omitted at the request of the group's officers because they felt it might discourage people from contributing.

President Jackson recommended the treasurer's report include information on beginning and ending balances and expenditures.

4. **Report on diversity initiatives.** Dr. Glen Jones, Executive Assistant to the President for Diversity Initiatives, presented an overview of the university's history of enrollment and employment history. He said minority employment percentages have increased in the past 10 years but they do not mirror the minority student population. He said more will be done to expand faculty and staff awareness of the benefits of a diverse and inclusive environment which will better meet the needs of the customer - the student.

He said there are three concepts to keep in mind when determining how the university proceeds in regard to diversity:

- a. Structural diversity - Proportional representation of historically underrepresented groups
- b. Diversity initiatives - Actions taken to make us more sensitive to those not like ourselves
- c. Diverse interactions - Awareness of how often we interact with people not like ourselves

Steps toward achieving a diverse and inclusive environment at ASU will include:

- a. Development of new tactics in recruitment of people not like the majority on campus
- b. Education of ourselves through sensitivity training

- c. Evaluation of employment process, including educating search committee members and others in charge of hiring on diversity matters
- d. Stepped-up retention efforts for faculty, staff and students
- e. Assessment of our personal feelings toward others

Dr. Jones said diversity is a key factor in the university's ability to recruit and retain the best students, faculty and staff. Doug Mathis recommended that Staff Senate support the university's diversity initiatives by recruiting minority staff members to fill university committee positions.

- 5. **Town hall meeting update.** Senator Freeman reported that Dr. Wyatt requested that members of the President's Council be present at the meeting to answer question from staff. She said it is important that questions be submitted as soon as possible. Panelists will receive the questions in advance. Questions can be placed in boxes located in buildings throughout campus or emailed directly to Philip Jackson (pjackson@astate.edu).
- 6. **Vacation accrual update.** Senator Barnhill reported that the ad hoc committee has met and will seek more information on option #2 in JW Mason's recommendation to Dr. Wyatt. Senator Barnhill said Dr. Wyatt is leaning toward endorsement of option #3. The options are:
 - 1. The vacation policy can be left as is. The classified employees start low but max out at higher than the non-classified employees.
 - 2. Increase the non-classified accrual rate so that their classification maxes out at 22.5. This would be the same as adding 2.5 days to all current non-classified employees. This would create an additional liability of \$145, 676. The average salary of non-classified employees at ASU is \$53,000.
 - 3. Grandfather all current non-classified employees in at 20 days per year. The equalize the accrual rate for all employees starting with 12 days per year and maxing out at 22.5 after 20 years of service.
- 7. **Employee opinion survey.** A report* on findings of the recent employee opinion survey sent to ASU faculty and staff was distributed. Dr. Kim Hester will be invited to the next Staff Senate meeting to interpret findings.
- 8. **Raffle tickets.** Santa's Tribe recently sent email to staff senators requesting assistance with the sale of raffle tickets as part of their fundraising effort. President Jackson said raffles are considered gambling in Arkansas and are illegal. He apologized for authorizing the distribution of the email.
- 9. **Grievance update.** President Jackson distributed copies of his memo* to Dr. Wyatt recommending the recent secretarial grievance issue be forwarded to the Staff Hearing Committee. He noted the Senate's two main objections in the matter. First, nowhere in the employee staff handbook does it state that the Associate Vice President for Human Resources has the authority to determine when the Staff Hearing Committee will convene. Employees using the handbook for guidance on grievance issues can be misled by this omission. Second, many senators have reservations about a system that enables one person to subjectively define a legitimate grievance. The definition of a legitimate grievance is more objectively addressed in a committee format.

Dr. Wyatt responded by memo* stating that state personnel policies were followed and that there was no institutional error, therefore no grievable issue exists. He also stated that Dr. Mason is "the most qualified person on this campus to determine whether a grievable issue exists" and he "serves as an ex-officio member of all grievance committees and is charged with determining whether grievable issues even exist for review."

President Jackson said he was disappointed with Dr. Wyatt's response. He added that Staff Senate functioned in an appropriate advisory manner and the issue is concluded from the Senate's perspective.

Cindy Beason, one of the staff members who submitted a grievance, thanked the Senate for its efforts. She said she will continue to pursue the matter.

10. **Employee benefits fair.** Volunteers are needed to work in the Staff Senate booth at the Employee Benefits Fair. Those interested in helping should contact Philip Jackson as soon as possible.
11. **New business.**
 - a. Proposed mandatory vacation day on December 23 - The university is considering assessing all 12-month employees eight hours of vacation or comp time on December 23 in order to close the campus from December 23 through January 1.
Motion to recommend assessment of vacation or comp time on December 23: Senator Tinker
Second: Senator Hill
Vote: Unanimously approved
 - b. Staff Senate homecoming tailgate - President Jackson said since there is not enough time to organize the annual homecoming tailgate for staff, the money normally spent on the event could be donated to Santa's Tribe or applied to expenses of the staff/faculty picnic in the spring. He also said the tailgate event should be reviewed to define its goal and to determine if it is effective in meeting that goal. Senator Cremeens expressed reservations about donating the tailgate money to Santa's Tribe because few details are known about the group's goals and activities, particularly award criteria, award committee membership and award process. She said she was uncertain whether Santa's Tribe is affiliated with Staff Senate or is a separate entity, especially since Santa's Tribe requests fundraising assistance from Staff Senate but restricts the account balance information that can be included in Staff Senate budget reports.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45. The next meeting will be on Thursday, November 21, 2002 at 9 a.m. in the Dean B. Ellis Library Boardroom, 8th floor.

Submitted by
Laura Cremeens

* Copies of documents distributed at the meeting are available from the Staff Senate secretary (Laura Cremeens, phone x2468 or email lcremeen@astate.edu).