Minutes

Present: Michael Atkins, Dave Crockett, Rose Ellen Davis-Gross, Glenda Dickson, Tim Drake, Reggie Hawthorne, Janice Kleck, Phil Landreth, Dan Schmiedt

Absent: Negar Edwards

President Dave Crockett called the meeting to order.

1. Approval of Minutes: Michael Atkins moved to approve the minutes of the September 30, 2008 Staff Senate Executive Committee meeting as submitted. Tim Drake seconded the motion.

2. Announcements from the President
   A. Academic Council, Dave Crockett. The Provost presented the calendar committee proposal to Academic Council on October 1. They approved the concept of a calendar committee, but did not approve the recommended makeup of the committee. The Provost charged Stan Smith with coming up with a recommendation for the committee makeup. The recommendation will be reviewed at the next Academic Council meeting scheduled for December 3.
   B. Administrative Council, Lawrence Nichols. The budget situation was discussed.
   C. Board of Trustees, Dave Crockett. Report submitted (Attachment A).
   D. Governmental Affairs, Dave Crockett. No report.
   E. President’s Cabinet, Dave Crockett. The Cabinet met October 27. 1) Dave Crockett reiterated the offer of the Staff Senate to assist in any manner of service desired by the administration. He requested that a call for voluntary actions should precede any mandated actions. The administration is currently receiving cost cutting priorities from budget centers, reviewing all construction projects, limiting hiring to critical positions, and refocusing the capital campaign. 2) The Undergraduate and Graduate Student Senates held their 1st joint meeting on October 27.
   F. Other:
      1) Human Resources, Lawrence Nichols. 1) Dave Crockett informed Lawrence Nichols that the Staff Senate preferred draft 1 and draft 2 of the 2009 holiday options equally. Nichols can choose from either option on the Senate’s behalf. 2) Annual enrollment ends October 31. 3) A retirement issue will be listed on the November 4th ballot. Additional information will be forthcoming.
   G. Faculty Senate Update, Dave Crockett. No report.

3. Standing Committees
   A. Activities, Negar Edwards. No report.
   B. Communications, Rose Ellen Davis-Gross. The booth at the Benefits Fair was successful. Popcorn was popular with the attendees.
   C. Membership, Phil Landreth. 1) Senators completing their 1st terms will be e-mailed to gauge interest in serving a 2nd term. 2) Dave Crockett will send a note to four senators inquiring into their absences from meetings and ask if they have barriers to attending.
   D. Policy and Welfare, Michael Atkins. P&W did not meet in October. 1) The initial meeting of the calendar committee is tentatively set for November 13. Michael Atkins will represent the Staff Senate. Atkins will inform Stan Smith of the appointment. 2) Dean Sams invited Michael Atkins and Ginger Swire-Clark to a meeting to discuss the budget situation in CAFLS. Atkins noted that Sams should be commended on his open approach and communication with the college
in this regard. Atkins expressed his concern to Sams that neither bonuses nor pay raises should be given in this financial climate. Any that have already occurred should be scrutinized.

E. Scholarship, Reggie Hawthorne. The idea of working in a development capacity for the Staff Senate Scholarship Endowment is being investigated.

4. Unfinished Business
   A. Staff Senate Representative to the BOT, Dave Crockett. The issue is currently on hold until timing issues with the budget can be fully explored.
   C. BOT Staff Awards, Dave Crockett. The decision was made to continue with the current award process. An avenue will be added to accommodate nominations for special recognition.

5. New Business
   A. Corbett Resignation – Dave Crockett accepted Kristina Corbett’s resignation. Crockett will email the Senate informing them of the resignation and the need to fill the treasurer position for the remainder of her term. The Senate vacancy will be filled during the regular election in 2009.
   B. Dave Crockett distributed an anonymous letter to President Barker requesting that the Staff Development Plan not proceed considering current financial cuts. A brief discussion followed.
   C. Budget Discussion – Dave Crockett distributed questions he thought about submitting to President Barker. The group agreed with the content and asked that he pose the questions.

6. Announcements
   A. Dave Crockett appointed Pam Hawthorne as the Staff Senate representative to the MKL Awards Selection Committee.
   B. Rusty Guill has agreed to seek input from, and report back to the Staff Senate on the “chapel” project. Dave Crockett will notify Gail DiSabatino that Guill is an acceptable representative for staff.

7. Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 25, 2008, 9:00 AM, 801 University Union
The Staff Senate reports to the Facilities and Finance subcommittee of the BOT. We always submit a written report a couple of weeks in advance of the meeting and the text of that report was included with the agenda for our last Senate meeting.

In light of developments since that written report was penned, I felt obliged to go ‘off-script’ and make some impromptu remarks at the F&F committee meeting on Thursday. Basically I related the thrust of some conversations I’ve even been direct or indirect parties to regarding the possibility of jobs being eliminated at Clemson. The most significant, of course, was my personal conversation with Pres. Barker on Oct. 10. That meeting was at his request after receipt of my draft letter for his signature to be included in Staff Development Program information packets. It was then that he made the statement “We are past the point of talking about ‘losing positions’. We are talking about firing people.” Against that backdrop, I urged the Board of Trustees to advise the administration to talk with staff BEFORE making any firing decisions...that I believed that there were those among staff who would voluntarily take salary/work hour reductions if it would help keep others from losing their jobs. I am among that group, and I’ve received indications from others that they also would consider such an action.

The Anderson Independent-Mail report of that meeting is a reasonably accurate account of my comments to the F&F committee, including committee Chair Bill Amick’s response to my remarks. The Greenville News report focuses less on my remarks but the quote attributed to me is accurate.

At the full Board meeting on Friday, I felt it better for me to work from prepared remarks. They are attached. Basically, I stressed that all of us on Senate are ready and willing to serve as a resource to both the Board and the administration during this difficult time. The Anderson newspaper report of that meeting is also attached. I’d note as an aside that Pres. Barker came to me just before the meeting to ask if I was “going to talk more about firing people” in my remarks. I assured him that I was only going to offer the Senate as a resource and nothing more in this venue.

I’m providing this information to you because I want you to be fully apprised of my activities on Senate behalf and to be aware of the gravity of the situation staff are facing right now. I have absolutely no doubt that some people are going to lose their jobs or, at the very least, to take a salary/hours cuts in the near future. I believe that staff will bear the brunt of those actions. And I remain concerned that these actions will come with little or no Staff Senate input and without any significant attempt to solicit voluntary steps beforehand, despite our response to Dori Helms on Aug. 28 specifically addressing these issues. I can only hope I am wrong on all counts.

There was no time for me to seek your advice before I made my remarks, but I hope you can support what I was attempting to do.

Thanks.

-djc
Yesterday (October 15) was the rescheduled meeting date for Bryan Simmons and me to meet with Dori Helms and Gail DiSabatino on parking. As it turned out, Dori had to skip the meeting and she sent David Grigsby (one of her associates) in her place. Bryan and I had precious little more background on the agenda for the meeting coming in. Gail did far more talking than David.

It turns out that DiSabatino was trying to get a handle on all the issues and apparent ‘heat’ that have surrounded recent parking proposals. She saw the long-awaited reply from Geary Robinson to Bryan and my questions that remained unresolved after our meeting with George Smith and him back in June (I shared a copy of that reply with you folks earlier), but had no real background on the meeting or what led up to it.

So we gave her all the background we could. We covered the earlier ‘trial balloon’ that had been floated more than a year ago to raise parking fees without a detailed plan for the use of those funds (the idea that was quickly scuttled by the administration, but not until AFTER student senates had embraced higher fees on the misunderstanding that Staff and Faculty Senates were also ‘on board’ with higher fees). We characterized that as how ‘the students were sold a bill of goods’ on parking and transportation fee increases. We covered the most recent ‘pro-formas’ this spring that proposed higher fees WITH a proposed plan of use, but with many unanswered (or unacceptably answered) questions. We covered the Robinson/Smith meeting that grew out of the Senates’ letter of concern to President Barker, and why we felt the unprecedented joint letter was necessary (our concern that ‘presentation’ to the Senates was being incorrectly portrayed as ‘endorsement’ by those bodies).

Simmons’ take on the current situation, after discussing with his Exec. is that while parking is tight now...and getting tighter...it is not critical (yet). Therefore, there is no problem (yet) and if there is no problem, there is no need to raise fees right now. Later? Probably. But right now, no. I generally subscribe to that position as far as it goes, but I repeatedly stressed the bigger issue of the many MISSED opportunities and venues which have been available to try to explore the long-term parking situation and build consensus and buy-in among all constituencies on long-term solutions with consistent information and forthright dialog. By misrepresenting (or, more charitably, incompletely representing) proposals to raise fees to the various employee and student Senates in separate meetings on multiple occasions, Robinson and others have largely botched any possibility of building consensus and buy-in for any solution. Likewise, my information from Bill Hughes about the Parking Advisory Committee (with substantiation from the Faculty Senate representative through Simmons) suggests THAT group also has largely been mismanaged and underutilized for at least two years now, further alienating the constituency groups about the issues AND their respective positions on the issues regarding solutions.

Much of this ire (and I found myself apologizing more than once if I sounded confrontational and obstructionist) seemed to come as a surprise to DiSabatino and Grigsby. She offered a three-point series of parking-related goals to try to refocus the issue and try to get it back on track. In a nutshell:

1. People should be able to find a place to park when they get to campus. They should not have to drive around hunting for a spot to park. When they park in the morning they should get around campus for the rest of the day using means other than their car, i.e. walking, biking, bus/shuttles.
2. The bus/shuttle system will need to be improved to allow people to get around once on campus.
3. The campus needs to be safe for walking and cycling.

We all agreed that these goals are reasonable and appropriate. And we agreed that accomplishing these goals will likely require an adjustment of parking fees at some point. Beyond that, we started to move apart on how, when and how much for whom. DiSabatino does NOT like the current tiered parking fee
structure based on salary for a number of reasons...some I might concur with...some I definitely don’t. She prefers, if it is tiered, that it be built around the perceived value of different parking locations to users (close in and convenient=expensive; outlying and less convenient=cheaper).

I suggested that the two need not be mutually exclusive. We could have a cross-tabulated fee structure that factors in BOTH salary and perceived convenience, effectively giving a wider spread of cost options to all employees who could then assess their own priorities and ability to pay. I can envision, for example, a VP and a custodian CHOOSING to park side-by-side in the same central campus lot by paying the TOP ‘convenience’ rate in their respective ‘salary’ tiers yielding substantially different individual parking fees. Likewise in an outlying lot, paying BOTTOM ‘convenience’ rate in their respective ‘salary’ tiers and much lower but different individual parking fees. This idea may get more discussion. And we all agreed that some protection for the very lowest paid employees needs to be a consideration. There were several other tangential discussions (new buildings, the Campus Planning Office, the Transportation Study, et al.) but this is the most significant, I believe.

What happens next? Simmons and I were assured that no presentation will be made to Admin. Council on parking until DiSabatino is satisfied with it in the context of the three goals above and the existence of some agreement of funding those goals can be achieved. Especially with the current economic climate, it’s MY hope that the administration has heightened sensitivity to some of the tactical blunders that have occurred along the way in this arena in the past and will move forward with some fresh perspective on how they can be avoided in the future. And I hope that the administration will make more of an effort (through Robinson, the Parking Advisory Committee and others) to deal more candidly with the employee and student constituencies in the process.

Whew. Sorry to be so long-winded. If you have comments, it may be better to send them to me directly. I think the Exec listserv is getting overtaxed (and I’m the main one doing it!).

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