



Pittsburg State University

University Support Staff Senate Meeting

November 9th, 2020

Terri Blessent called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. Present were: Senators Carrol Bell, Terri Blessent, Brandi Boswell, Ann Courtney, Kevin Elrod, Betty Geier, Tina Gregory, Jordan Harding, Michelle Hensley, Jerrica Lair, Diane Letner, Tish Potter, Cindy VanBecelaere, Stephanie Willis, Mary Wolfe, Dan Workman, Woody Lopez, Jeannice Parker, and guests Mary Jo Meier, Dr. Cole Shewmake, Dr. Steve Erwin, Dr. Steve Scott, Scarlett Bowles, and Stephanie West.

Review of October minutes: Diane Letner moved to approve the minutes, Woody Lopez seconded, and the motion carried.

Treasurer's Report, Cindy VanBecelaere: There were no expenditures in October. The Budget account balance remains at \$2380.00, while the Foundation account balance remains at \$57.04. Carrol Bell moved to accept the report, Woody Lopez seconded, and the motion carried.

Mary Jo Meier reported on the University Professional Staff Senate meeting on 11/4, which was convened via Teams (as have all their meetings this semester). The University has been told that for FY 22 we should anticipate a 10% budget shortfall. Dr Kathleen Sandness spoke to the UPSS on the Bryant Student Health Center, while Dr. Smith spoke about the changes to Commencement and the Spring 2021 schedule. A student survey is forthcoming. Dr. Kegler and Deatrea Rose were congratulated on their new positions.

Cole Shewmake reported from the Faculty Senate. KBOR is working with us to develop a free expression statement. The Student Senate has requested three to five Mental Health Days sprinkled through semester. The Faculty Senate will respond to the Provost with their thoughts, which include scheduling the days midweek to prevent three-day weekends and students leaving campus. The primary roadblock is that some certifications across campus have to attend all scheduled semester hours (i.e. OSHA, nursing programs) for compliance.

Terri Blessent reported on her meeting with Dr. Scott on November 10th. The COVID spike across the state of Kansas is a preeminent concern. There was some good fiscal news: back in April, the state expected a \$1.4 BN deficit, but the actual number is closer to \$150 M. Spring enrollment is down, and the current expectation is that returning freshmen may wait until the last minute to finalize plans.

Committee Reports

Elections, Ann Courtney: nothing new

Public Relations, Ann Courtney: the new USSS photo is available and will be posted in the cabinet across from the post office.

Welcoming, Diane Letner: Alec Lindsay-Gaikowski is the new auto mechanic in Physical Plant Grounds and Carol Young is the new University Police and Parking Service's Communications Specialist.

Parking, Jordan Harding: all 6 appeals were denied.

Board of Governors, Michelle Hensley: Kansas 1 and Balkans are being upgraded for ZOOM and Teams. The university has acquired two more electrostatic guns for cleaning. The Axe Grind coffee shop is closing for the semester. New benches have been emplaced by Sodexo.

Strategic Planning, Terri Blessent: Current objectives were reviewed during a brief meeting.

IT Council, Michelle Hensley: The College of Education will be able to offer 8-week sessions of classes in the Leadership program beginning in Spring 21. The assessment module is being fixed. The new degree audit is now available to students & advisors. The expansion of outdoor WIFI is now complete, and the picnic tables are placed in areas of optimal reception. The University is looking at a new antivirus vendor and an upgrade to the server operating system, as well as a new system for financial aid and grant management.

Campus Safety & Security, Betty Geier: no meeting.

Docking Institute Survey Subcommittee, Terri Blessent: a meeting was held on 10/27 to set up the timeframe. The next survey is slated for Fall 2022. The last one was in Spring 2019. It was spearheaded by PSU and then spread to KBOR except for KU because they had completed one while PSU's survey was in the planning stages. They are expected to join the next one. The subcommittee will reconvene in January before students return to review the previous survey and responses for possible revisions. PSU contracted and paid for it last time and was reimbursed by other institutions. Dr. Scott has said he is willing to pay for the PSU portion again.

Old Business: During the last Town Hall, Doug Ball mentioned that PSU is looking into early retirement buyout, but that it will not work for every employee due to not rehiring positions for a year. At this time, the University is not looking at pay cuts for 2021. All employees were given paid leave for the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and the four working days from December 28-31.

Woody was able to get clarification from Jamie about COVID leave, and Dan got answers to his questions about adjunct hours for full-time employees.

New Business: Betty Geier was unanimously approved to be reinstated as an at-large Senator, and Stephanie West was also unanimously approved to join as an at-large Senator. Kathy Benard had submitted her resignation from the Senate the day prior to the meeting, and Tina Gregory submitted hers today, resulting in the need to fill two more Senate positions.

Good of the Order: The next USSS meeting will be Dec. 9th. Dr. Scott then spoke for the remainder of the meeting.

COVID infection numbers among students are going back up as cold weather pushes people indoors and fatigue from the restrictions is causing people to relax safety measures. Our goal is to hold in-person classes until Friday, November 20th. The campus is depopulated of students as more classes have gone online/hybrid/hi-flex. Faculty and staff numbers have not increased because we have been faithful to adhere to good practices. Although we are proud of what we've accomplished, we are concerned about the coming surge. The vaccines are coming, but will not be available to most until later in the year.

The pandemic is creating financial hardship across America. Across the US, between February and October, the number of people working in Higher Education has gone down by 13.7%. If PSU had been on that track, we would have lost 100 employees; since we didn't, that means other institutions have lost far more than 13.7%. We currently have 100 fewer employees than we did in 2016. We are not out of the woods yet. Overall, FY21 will likely still be successful because we met our Fall enrollment targets, but for FY22, PSU was told to plan for a 10% cut, in case no further federal stimulus dollars become available. PSU's two primary revenue sources are state allocations and enrollments. The state allocation is projected to drop to \$27M, which is \$13M less than it was in 2009 when Dr. Scott became President. Spring enrollment has dropped by 13%; a normal drop is 3.7%. Students are upset about not

getting an on-campus experience. Vaccines are needed to get students back on campus, but in the meantime, students can still benefit from continuing their studies online. We can impact the student experience positively with our actions and attitudes. Be supportive, constructive, and helpful.

Concerning matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the campus is facing have dual issues. The pandemic has health and financial implications for many. The election has been divisive and created uncertainty. Both have raised concerns about social justice. It's a fact that proportionately more African-Americans are dying of COVID than white Americans. Anonymous polls display a wide range of views. Some want to address the issue, while others say everybody has the same opportunities. The University needs to lead in enlightening those who don't see we have work to do. We're not calling people racists – we're working to level the playing field. For example, students of color have different life experiences, and are differently impacted when a person who looks like them is killed by a police officer. Deatrea Rose's position was elevated and integrated into Student Life not only to address the needs of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals but also gender equality. We are not going to say everybody has a problem. We need a solution befitting our specific campus. We've got to work to make sure PSU has a strong future, and part of that is ensuring people who come to this campus are treated with respect and dignity.

In the midst of all this, what do we need to do to move things forward? \$6M has been contributed by three entities with an additional \$450K coming to build an emergency simulation hospital in McPherson Hall for our nursing program, which has phenomenal enrollment/pass rates as well as success in obtaining federal grants. The plan is to begin the build in Fall 21 and complete it in Spring 23. Bicknell and Plaster are already state-of-the-art. Axe Library is also integral to campus and has been transformed into a 21st-century facility after expenditures of \$1M per floor under the guidance and vision of Randy Roberts. Block 22 downtown really pleases the community because we're investing in the city, and local businesses are reciprocating by investing in the space.

Our IT department is likewise upgrading our campus offerings. Angela Neria has overseen outdoor WIFI extension. The next step will be to improve our security camera coverage utilizing this new WIFI infrastructure. Even in this time we prioritize safety, security, wellness, connectivity.

Football is a source of great pride on our campus and in our community. Although the Conference voted not to play, the bylaws do not forbid individual schools from playing, so a small season was arranged, which has been positively received by players, their parents, and the student body. All games will be conditioned on the outcomes of player testing.

The commencement committee did great work in designing a socially distanced commencement, allowing students, faculty, and families to honor this accomplishment safely. The physical plant and general services and custodial group take great pride in orchestrating these events for our students, and the University always receives huge praise for these celebrations.

Our annual Veterans' Day tribute can be viewed on video at pittstate.tv. The ceremony is 20 minutes long. We've proudly hosted an ROTC program on campus since 1952. General Pete Gallagher is a Colgan grad. We have a National Guard armory on campus. We are proud of our military connection.

After November 20th, all offices should still be open. We must ensure phone calls are answered. But we must empty campus as much as possible and work from home whenever practical. Let's show that since we are a great institution, we can deal with the pandemic better also.