OSU STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

November 13, 2002     412 Student Union     1:15 PM

Present:   Beeler, Bergbower, Blackburn, Brooks, Cimino, Collins, Conner, DeBock, Fedderson, Fulton, Gedon, Good, Hare, Hays, Hunt, Jacobs, King, Livsey, Magness, Miller, Mitchell, Peters, Richardson, Rogers, Sanmann, Shields, Tanner, Thomason, Welliver, Williams

Absent:   Hart

Tonya Magness called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm. Diana Jacobs called roll. Tonya asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the October meeting. There being no corrections, the minutes of the October 9th meeting stand approved. The agenda was amended by adding: Joe Weaver, Associate Vice President, Planning Budget & Institutional Research will give an update on OSU budget situation prior to Dr. Mitchell’s report. Duane asked to add discussion on the email he sent on mandatory leave. Motion was made to accept the amended agenda. Agenda was accepted by voice vote.

Joe Weaver, Interim Associate Vice President for Business & Finance
He appreciates members serving on SAC. At the beginning of the fiscal year we received a 2% cut. In September, the Office of State Finance told them that revenue was not coming in as expected. He was notified Tuesday, November 12, 2002, that higher education would have to cut another 1.75%. He’s not sure how much will be passed on to OSU. He recently attended a meeting at Iowa State University. The University of Missouri has already cut 10% and they are expecting to be asked to cut another 10%. Other institutions are raising tuition by large amounts. The only place that
wasn’t screaming about cuts was Texas and they prepare their budgets on a two-year cycle. We know this is a national problem. It’s bad here, but Joe came back from a meeting feeling better – that a 6% cut is better than a 20% cut. It could be a lot worse.

Tonya received some comments from staff concerned about mandatory leave days. From these comments, some staff perceives that if they give up mandatory leave days, there won’t be a furlough. She asked Dr. Vitek how to respond to that assumption. He said furloughs can be a possibility and we presently don’t know what our budget situation is. Does the administration have furloughs on the table as part of the discussion when another round of budget cuts come, and when can we inform staff of this so they are aware prior to the holiday season? How does the administration plan to inform staff if this is part of the discussion? Joe replied to these questions with the same answer: Administrators have no idea of what the cuts will be. They want to have a plan, but can’t at this point. Based on discussions with administration, they realize there is nervousness among university personnel. They will communicate as quickly as they can. 75% of our budget is salaries and benefits so positions may have to be cut. Tonya’s personal recommendation to the administration is that a web site or email be developed so staff can voice their opinions and ideas on how to save money. The idea of mandatory days at Christmas came from others outside of Whitehurst. Administrators welcome any comments and ideas. E-mail comments or ideas directly to Joe Weaver or Dave Bosserman. Tonya will forward comments she has received to Joe Weaver and Dave Bosserman. Tonya felt it would be interesting to know how many couples work at the University. Furloughs in a double income family would mean double days without pay.

Joe Weaver feels Brad Henry is a good spokesperson for a lottery, which could benefit education. He also feels the new chancellor will be good for OSU because of his background and professional experience. Joe stated he feels we could be approximately 6-8 months away from feeling positive signs of an economic upswing. When we make it through this year and probably next, we should be ok. Some institutions are raising tuition mid-year and OSU doesn’t want to do that; however, tuition increases may be coming at OSU.

Tonya stated that we are all in this together; it is not faculty versus staff. The question was asked why these days had to be mandatory days rather than holiday days. The answer was that if people had to work on holidays, they would get paid time and half, whereby mandatory days would require straight pay.

Executive Group Update – Dr. Earl Mitchell, Associate Vice President for Multicultural Affairs

He just returned from a meeting where two things were talked about – Homeland Security and Economic Development. After all the talk and meetings – the talk around the tables was about budget situations. Colleges from New Hampshire to California are talking cutting budgets. OSU is in better shape than a lot of other universities, of which some have already started cutting programs. There are two things to be concerned about: cash flow (money we don’t have today or money that hasn’t come in) and permanent long-term cuts. Furloughs can take care of the cash flow. E-group has not talked about furloughs, but it doesn’t mean it’s not an option. If there is a furlough, it will probably come at Spring Break. We should know in a couple weeks. Furloughs are always possible, just not an option. The only financial contingency plan includes faculty, none for staff. By definition a ‘furlough’ is a day off work without pay. People who are
considered low income may not be made to take furloughs. By definition, mandatory leave is time off work using vacation or comp time to get paid. How many staff can afford to take a week off without pay? (Not very many.) Some employees live from paycheck to paycheck.

The AGR Fraternity situation has caused OSU lots of embarrassment and is still a problem. The alumni of the fraternity met a couple weeks ago to look at what they can do as alumni. Mitchell has met with the campus fraternity five times and finds the students receptive towards solutions. The ongoing theme of these meetings is that we are in this together. There has been a lot of input from faculty and staff suggesting intensive diversity training at this Fraternity as well as throughout the campus.

**Athletic Council Update – Jada Bruner-Gailey**

The busiest activity in the fall for the Athletic Council is scheduling sporting events. They review, approve, and then send them to the Executive VP for approval before being published. A lot of time is spent discussing schedules. It has to meet NCAA requirements. They study the missed class policy in reviewing schedules. The policy says that no team sports should miss more than 10 class days in a semester. It takes in to account team GPAs and individual GPAs. The men’s golf team is one that pushes the 10-day limit, yet maintains one of the highest GPAs.

The Athletic Council is discussing a Sportsmanship Award – this can be awarded to coaches, faculty, staff, anyone. The criteria are being developed now. The award would be given at an All Sports Banquet once a year. Dr. Birdwell announced that football ticket sales have reached an all time high this year.

**Branch Campus Reports**

**OSU-Com** – No report.

**OSU-Okmulgee** – Devin DeBock. Their campus is participating in the 3 mandatory leave days at Christmas the same as OSU with classes to begin on Jan. 6th, so prep time for classes must be planned accordingly. An early retirement program has been instituted; they will see full effects in 2003. They are looking at a $1.4 million budget reduction next year. Based on speculation, an ad hoc committee has been formed to look at ways to cut the budget. They had an NCA post visit last week. There were two concerns and lots of praise. They recently wrapped up the United Way campaign and exceeded their goal.

**OSU-OKC** – Laura Hare. OSU-OKC will take part in the mandatory closing at Christmas and has been positively received. They feel this is better than layoffs. They have finished the nomination process for their DSA, for which a ceremony will be held in April. They held a chili cookoff fundraiser around Halloween, and raised $300. They are planning an annual Christmas Dinner to include faculty and staff. They are asking everyone to bring their ugliest decoration rather than spending for decorations from an already strained budget.

**OSU-Tulsa** – Marcia Hays. They are also doing the mandatory leave days at Christmas and the feedback is very positive. They recently had their benefactors scholarship
dinner where five staff received scholarships. Next week is the family fund lunch where they are having tricycle races. The vice presidents are heading up the tricycle race teams and the money raised will go into Foundation accounts. They wrapped up their United Way campaign and exceeded their goal.

**Report of Standing Committees**

A thank you note was received and read by Tonya from Connie Walker who received a DSA award.

**Awards & Recognition** – Trisha Gedon

Trish thanked everyone for all his or her help at the Staff Awards Day. There was a good turnout. We have received mostly positive feedback and some negative feedback. The unclaimed pins will be available in 106 Whitehurst until December 3rd, and then they will be mailed.

**Tonya wants to add this to the minutes** - During the awards ceremony I failed to acknowledge some of our Distinguished Service Nominee’s. For the record I would like to add to the Awards & Recognition report my sincere apology for this oversight. Please let the minutes reflect the apology I tried to extend to these individuals via email, and for those individuals who do not receive email, I trust you will receive a copy of the SAC minutes.

It is with deep regret that I failed to acknowledge you for your nomination of the Distinguished Service Award at the November 7th Ceremony. I truly apologize for the oversight that was made on my part. It is truly an honor to have been nominated for such an award by your fellow peers and such a failure for me not to acknowledge your accomplishments.

Please accept my sincere apologies for this oversight and know that it is truly an honor to work with the distinguished staff of Oklahoma State University.

Please let the SAC minutes reflect that the following individuals who should have been recognized at the awards ceremony.

- Clara Lewis – Coordinator, Audio Visual Center – Printing
- Kimberly Marotta – Administrative Assistant, English Department
- Becky Schlais – Manager, HES Research Services (and former chair of SAC)
- Rebecca Tomlinson – Registered Nurse, University Health Services
- Daena Jones – Technician, Human Resources
- Wilda Reedy – Senior Unit Assistant, School of Educational Studies
- Willa Hulet – Staff Assistant, Communication Sciences & Disorders
- David Richards – Custodian, Physical Plant Services
- Sarai Marsh – Custodian, Physical Plant Services
- Patty Majors – Custodian, Physical Plant Services
- Brenda Heningman – Parking Booth Attendant, Student Union Parking Services
- Patrick Phillips – Bindery Operator, Audio Visual Center – Printing
- Robert McCaslin – Bindery Supervisor, Audio Visual Center – Printing
- Barbara Ann Gensman – Postal Foreman, University Mailing
- Elizabeth Whitfield – Staff Assistant, Ag Ed, Comm, & 4-H
- Talya Henderson – Administrative Associate, Environmental institute
- Jay Johnson – Manager, LAN Systems, CIS LAN Systems
Policies, Benefits and Budget – Sheryl Beeler
The PB&B Committee met Wednesday, November 6, 2002 in Rm. 302 S.U.

1. - LTD Policy. The committee received comments back from Kay Ensign as to the questions that we asked. There are 3 different issues within the policy that after hearing the comments remain unresolved.

#2.02 We asked them to look at the wording on the next to last sentence concerning "other" employees. We do not understand who "other" employees are and in what case that identity would be used.

ANSWER: We could not see there was a problem with the wording; because it was to clarify there could be other employees that were not entitled to LTD benefits that were not named specifically.

#3.09 We asked them to look at the certificate that the University has with American Fidelity and see if American Fidelity has a set deadline "response time" to respond back to the employee with the final decision as to coverage.

ANSWER: American Fidelity intentionally does not make a decision until the elimination period has almost ended, because they want to be sure that a person who was disabled at the onset of the elimination period continue to be disabled 6 months later. Therefore, they are not going to approve somebody early (at least not very early).

#3.16 Kay was going to talk with Anne about putting an option in place for people with excess leave (over 6 months), so it would be stated that employees with extensive leave could use leave vs. LTD, if preferred.

ANSWER: Anne Matoy's response: "Currently we have established that this is an option permitted under the plan although we do not think it was the original intent to have this as an option. The theory is that once you qualify for LTD, you start receiving benefits. I guess I would put it this way. We did not build "option" into the plan, but neither did we "prevent" it. Anne went on to that there is currently another recommendation under consideration that would have some impact on "choice" if that were to specifically be named as an option."

Not knowing what the other considerations are at this time, the only thing we have to go on is the interim policy. The committee is recommending that a letter be drawn up from the council to administration expressing our concerns on the 3 issues for this interim policy.

2. - Parking issue in the SU parking garage during training. The committee has decided to do some research on the bus routes and shuttle service before making any recommendations on the issue.

3. - Distinguished Service Awards. In light of the OSU budget crunch, the committee feels that a permanent salary increase is a great idea for the future, but maybe not at this time. However, being that the amount of the DSAs has remained the same since 1983, we feel like it is time to ask for a larger sum of money. We would like to make a recommendation to the council to send a letter to administration asking that the amount
of money for the Distinguished Service Awards be raised to $750.00. We feel like this amount should be as stated after taxes.

4. MLK Day, We had a constituent email a request to ask administration for Martin Luther King Holiday off. We realize this has been reviewed in the past and did not get very far; however, as a courtesy, we are checking on holidays at other Big 12 universities.

The LTD recommendation will be voted on at the next meeting. Discussion was held on increasing the DSA awards. The recommendation to increase the DSA awards from $500 to $750 was brought to a motion by Duane Hunt and seconded. It was voted on and passed by voice vote.

For the Council’s information and historical information to be repeated about Martin Luther King - When the Afro American student organization asked for SAC input when the university decided to acknowledge Dr. King’s birthday by taking the day off or have on campus activities. The staff didn’t want the holiday as a leave day because it conflicted with enrollment and came at a time when the university was just returning from the Christmas and New Years holidays. Staff preferred that we celebrate the day with activities and let individual staff decide if they wanted to attend and or participate in the activities.

Tonya added: The administration would require that we reduce the holiday leave schedule by taking a holiday from another day. While OSU may be the only Big 12 University that doesn’t take the day off we do have on campus activities. If you look at the holiday schedule of other Big 12 universities, you will find that some of them do not celebrate Labor Day. I do not want to give the impression that Dr. King’s birthday is not a significant day or of less importance than other holidays. I want to say once again the university doesn’t acknowledge several Federal holidays, those being Columbus Day, President’s Day, and Veterans Day. The staff made a decision they would prefer to participate in a celebration of his life with on campus activities rather then not do anything to recognize Dr. King by just staying home. A major portion of the OSU staff commutes to campus from outlying communities and therefore, would not drive to Stillwater just to participate in the activities. This way staff members have the choice to participate or not to participate.

Marcia hays added: OSU Tulsa celebrates MLK Day partly due to where OSU-Tulsa is located. They participate in the parade and other related celebratory activities.

**Public Relations** – Hank Welliver
Hank thanked Deb for presenting at NEO and also thanked the greeters. He apologized to the committee and Council for not doing as much the last month as he had hoped. 25 homecoming mums were sold. Next year, maybe the announcement can appear on the payroll advices.

**Rules & Procedures** – Bonnie Richardson. No report

**Old Business**
**Student Union Parking – Tonya Magness**
This issue has been returned to the PB&B committee for additional consideration and information gathering prior to any recommendation.
New Business

OSU Policy on Bomb Threats – Policy 3-0522
Tonya received some complaints from staff about the recent bomb threats. She will be sharing those concerns with the administration. Dr. Bosserman has asked Chief Everett Eaton to review the bomb threat policy. If you have any suggestions or ideas, feel free to e-mail Chief Eaton. During the last bomb threat, the telephone voice mail system went down. Some e-mails were received after 5:00pm. It was noted that if the fire alarm system goes off, please exit the building because they may be notifying occupants of a bomb threat.

Distinguished Service Awards – Duane Hunt
Duane thanked the members of the Distinguished Service Award Selection committee for their work in the recently completed process. These members were Leslie Cimino, Dell Livsey, Hank Welliver, Denise Brooks, and Trisha Gedon. Additionally, I would like to thank the standing committee chairs for nominating these members to serve on the Selection Committee.

During the DSA interviews, candidates are encouraged to make suggestions that OSU could be doing for staff. Usually comments are focused on salaries, benefits, more staff, etc. Here are a few new suggestions from the latest selection process:

Allow payroll deductions for athletic/sports events and permit them to be spread out over several months.

SAC meeting times should be set to allow staff members that are not representatives to attend, for example during the lunch hour.

There needs to be more job sharing.

Bring back the LEAD/ALP Scholarship program.

Discussion of Other University or Departmental Staff Awards – Duane Hunt
During the past distinguished service award selection process, Duane learned some of the colleges and non-academic units have their own, internal employee recognition/award program. These internal programs may or may not detract from the Staff Advisory Council’s distinguished service award process. At a minimum, these programs provide employees within those units a greater chance to receive recognition than those working in units without an internal recognition/award program.

Duane believes it is important for SAC to learn more about the various award programs. He asked the Council to direct the Chair of the Awards and Recognition Committee to determine/identify which colleges and non-academic units have an employee recognition program and report back to the Council detailed information about each of the programs.

Mandatory leave
Resolved: The Staff Advisory Council does not advocate the use of a furlough or layoff of employees, but recognizes certain actions must be taken to meet reductions in state allocations. Given that, furloughs are more amendable to the Council than layoffs. Yet, there appears to be actions University Administration might consider aligning the state
allocations with the expenses of the University before turning to furloughs and/or layoffs.
The Council requests Administration consider the following:

There are a number of employees with expense accounts. These funds should be among the first funds taken from departments, followed closely by curtailment of travel.

Immediately pursue action to eliminate the OSU contribution to retirement accounts of all employees for as long as it is necessary to meet the allocation shortfall. Losing this payment to the retirement account now could be a better option than going without pay.

Mandatory furlough for an extended period should be avoided as the loss of pay to employees for a continuous period of time could create a financial hardship on many employees and their families. Furloughs, if required, should allow employee participation in deciding when they will be furloughed.

Inform the employee of the number of days with no pay that are required and allow each employee to determine the actual day they will be furloughed.

If it is decided the best way to meet the reduction in allocations is to furlough staff for a consecutive period of days, administration should consider allowing employees to distribute this lost of pay over several months, thus lessening the financial impact to staff.

Tonya does believe the administration is making every effort to develop cost savings that will have the least amount of impact for all staff. The majority of staff are willing to accept the universities efforts in developing the cost savings by reducing the utilities during the holidays and do not mind using annual leave. However, the administration needs to be aware that this decision has had a negative impact on some staff. She has received numerous complaints and or concerns from staff regarding the “mandatory leave” issue. All staff concerns will be shared with the appropriate administrative level.

Motion was made to adjourn. It was seconded. Meeting adjourned at 3:05