



## STAFF SENATE

Thursday, July 11, 2024

GAC 401 - Boardroom

**Members in attendance:** Dave Gutoskey, Frank Bowen, Rachel Faust, Joe Benyish, Steve Blankenship, Isabella Chow, Megan Raymond, Lisa Gray, Shannon Hardester, Tabitha Pilchard, Candace Henry, Donna Knopf, Kelly Cowger, Tina Boyd

**Absent:** JJ Remo

- I. **Guests:** Eli Modlin, President Lepre, Aurora Edenhart-Pepe, Christine Benoit, Mike Papagikos
- II. Call to Order 10:01am  
-Joe Benyish
- III. Approval of April Meeting Minutes
  - a. *Motion to approve:* Frank Bowden
  - b. *Second:* Tony Sampson
- IV. Introductions of New Senators for FY25 – Kelly Cowger & Donna Knopf
- V. President's Office
  - Summer Hours
  - Thanks to Staff Senate for efforts organizing and running Employee Appreciation Day. Received good feedback from campus about the day.
  - State ongoing fiscal challenges/predictions for this year.
    - Predicting 250-million-dollar shortfall at State level
    - Dept of Budget Mgmt announced capital project cuts, but SU was not included in those cuts, other systems schools were not so lucky. Our relationship building in Annapolis is to credit for those efforts to continuously cultivate those relationships.
    - 1% cut to USM System's budget from State
    - USM cut by 19.1 million dollars, but SU gets 6% of the USM budget, could mean about 1.1 million that comes as a cut to us but don't know yet.
    - Developing strategies to not impact each unit.
    - Focusing on caring for people over "things" is the decision model for budgeting.
    - Grateful to have given Cola/Merit, but those raises were not fully covered by the state introducing more budget challenges.
    - Will be a tight year, be prepared. Aurora and her team have done extensive modelling to make the budget work, but very little wiggle room. All money is distributed, what you've got is what you've got in individual departmental "03" budgets.
    - Enrollment – Biggest lever for financial picture. Looking very solid for Fall showing strong percentage 1478ish new freshmen. Within 13 transfer students of our count from last year and up 2-3% on grad students. Very successful and retention holding steady at 80% which is extraordinary for our category of institution.
    - Marketing & Communications strategic restructuring - Creating a standalone team in enrollment management to handle programmatic marketing to parents and students. Katie Curtin will be leading that new division. Publications is now Creative Services & Brand Strategy and staying reporting to President's Office. Megan/Josh staying with Crystal.

- New VP for Inclusion, Access & Belonging – Zebediah Hall – starting this week. Coming from the University of Wyoming.
- Eli Govt Relations – Governor is continuing to show support for Higher Ed. Even when facing a 250m shortfall getting such a small cut to USM is remarkable. And most of the cuts that did occur to other schools were capital projects, we were able to retain the Blackwell Hall renovation capital project due to student commitment and focus.
- Delegate Anderton is stepping down from Legislature to join Dept of Commerce, he was our delegate for Salisbury University, but we will get a new one appointed by governor for next two years.
- Joe – “What can Staff Senate do for the institution?” – Serve as a sounding board and ear to the ground as a pulse for how staff feel. The biggest thing is to continue to communicate and sending questions ahead of time helps come prepared. Continue to be honest/open/blunt source of feedback for cabinet. How do we continue to cultivate the sense that our workforce is so important to us, and we care about people feeling satisfied/cared for. The Senate can help host events and build inclusion.
- Questions for Administration:
  - What can Staff Senate do for the institution?
    - Dr. Lepre – Serve as a sounding board and ear to the ground as a pulse for how staff feel. The biggest thing is to continue to communicate and sending questions ahead of time helps come prepared. Continue to be honest/open/blunt source of feedback for cabinet. How do we continue to cultivate the sense that our workforce is so important to us, and we care about people feeling satisfied/cared for. The Staff Senate can help host events and build inclusion.
    - Aurora – Connection to staff, bidirectional relay of information to form connection both ways with cabinet. How to build from that and create a culture where people feel informed/valued in their opinion.
    - Eli – Share out with your peers you represent, the President talked about these cuts coming to the system in a way that all the institutions are facing the same budget cuts, but we don’t all start from the same place. There is a level of panic happening at other campuses that we may hear about, but SU is not in the same boat. Other campuses are shutting down buildings, openly talking about layoffs/shuttering programs. Because of our financial stability/responsibility we are not having those conversations at SU. Yes, things are tight, but we are in a good place compared to our peers.
  - Any talk of Layoffs/Furloughs/Hiring Freezes?
    - Dr. Lepre - Waiting for more feedback from Monday, might have to pause some hiring. Priority is to take care of the people we have first, which might mean we have already approved many searches but might have to pause, waiting to hear what some of the union negotiations come back with. A lot is still hanging out there that might affect our own people that has a budget impact we won’t know till January. Filled so many positions last year that we have less flexibility/contingency. Furloughs/layoffs not currently on table.
    - Aurora – Need to be careful in the fall. Waiting for more information from State and Union negotiations, don’t want to overspend and put anyone in jeopardy. Fiscal responsibility to make sure we can support the people already here as #1 priority.
    - Eli - 250m out of 63b budget, part of that shortfall is a result of the governor’s new spending. USM is a big target because we’re solvent with things like fund balances. We were 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cuts this year.

- How do we provide benefits/appreciate people who have been here a long time. What can be done to recognize those people for their loyalty to campus?
  - Discussion around the existing recognition programs and a desire to work with HR to brainstorm new ideas.
- Leadership training/supervisor training is needed. People like the visibility of cabinet and directors and approachability.
- For a long time being a part of staff senate is how we have stayed connected, important to hear from VP's/Director's top down some of the things that are currently misconceptions/misunderstandings. People fear what they don't know and if we aren't experiencing some of those budget concerns, they need to hear it from above to believe it.
  - Discussion about what is the best mechanism for communicating – either love or hate emails. What suggestions?
  - Different emails get different attention, President's Tuesday update might get more eyeballs than Fridays with the Flock. Needs to be timely and better to acknowledge a situation and state it's being worked on with updates to come as soon as possible than to wait until everything is figured out before starting the conversation with campus.
- Professional development funds are important and when we have cuts it can seem inequitably distributed on campus.
  - Discussion about the impact and visibility of professional development opportunities on campus and some of the perceptions/misconceptions on campus.

VI. Staff Senate Liaison- Aurora Edenhart-Pepe

- a. Workday update – Growing pains, have a business analyst position open to take the lead on some of the conversion of internal process to workday best practices. This is a massive change and people haven't necessarily wrapped their head around that until it's here. Frustrating because HR/Fin/IT aren't in charge, don't have the answers and aren't driving the bus. Five schools together in a system that we must fit what we're doing into it.

VII. HR Updates – Tina Boyd, Mike Papagikos, Christine Benoit

- Supervisor Feedback survey – Qualtrics surveys are complete and HJR is sifting through data. Hoping to distribute information to higher level leadership first and then distribute it down a week or two afterwards once the general themes and findings have been absorbed. Wanted to complete PMP cycle first so it had no impact on how those were conducted.
- Timesheets – Good for HR to communicate to campus about the leave usage policy in increments.
- Need a translation guide for the terminology to crosswalk old to new.
- Building out new Hire Orientation/Onboarding program and will be bringing material for feedback and suggestions to gather resources that new employees will need.
- Professional Development – building out internal offerings to have options for training freely available to campus. Two half days held quarterly being planned with departmental overviews. Suggested we help with a “Dry run” before it goes live.
- Increased visibility between HR and campus, want to be more involved with Slack and Chats and open sessions with HR on various topics. No central calendar to reference to find out about events, HR wants to attend and be more visible at campus events.

VIII. Staff Senate Reports

- a. Executive Board Election Results
  - i. 1<sup>st</sup> Chair – Joe
  - ii. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chair – Candace
  - iii. 3<sup>rd</sup> Chair – Tabitha
  - iv. Secretary – Steve
- b. Staff Senate Chair – Joe
  - i. Staff Senate Retreat – Downtown at Entrepreneurship center w boxed lunch. No Virtual opportunity.
    - The administration sees a lot of value in this group, and this will allow us to focus on providing constructive feedback and output.
    - Update and evaluate Bylaw changes for Staff Senate to restructure committee format.
    - What are the priorities for the upcoming year? Formal recommendations aren't necessarily the most effective means of getting results today, but we need to track and account for what our priorities and objectives are. Need tangible goals and objectives to accomplish.
- c. EAD –
  - i. One concern brought up was students winning days off/parking passes/etc
  - ii. Tabitha is working on EAD feedback survey to campus.
  - iii. Need to evaluate method of signing up for limited seating events. Can't use Qualtrics again.
  - iv. Overall, very positive feedback from campus
  - v. Dining still a concern for what can be done to recognize their efforts on EAD.
  - vi. Aquabed vendor had issues with half of beds not working
  - vii. People liked the items, but tote bag line was crazy long.
  - viii. Karaoke was fun!
  - ix. Concerns about whether departments allowed people to come.
  - x. 584 Lunch, 103 dinner attendees
- d. Summer Hours – Working on survey to campus for feedback in August timeframe.
- e. CUSS Update –
  - i. Next session is at SU on August 13<sup>th</sup> in GAC401, Joe will be SU Host.
  - ii. Wrap-up of prior year/end of year reports.
  - iii. Campus Tour would be nice to organize for CUSS on their next visit.

IX. Adjournment – 12:04