

STAFF SENATE Minutes
Cascades Room at IVTSCC, Thursday, March 15, 2012
12:00 noon – 1:00 P.M.

Attending: Aaron Akers, Bonnie Alberts, Susan Archer, Brent Bowden, Dan Cook, Joseph Goodman, Velva Groover, Jennifer Hanratty, Robena Hughes, Delbert Jones, Denise Jones, Shelly Key, Maxine Lyons, Steve Myers, Angie Robinson, Allison Rubio, Wyatt Sasser, Becky Saylor, Robert Sebeck, Louellen Sharp, David Sindt, Sue Teel, Leslie Thornton-O'Brien, Amy Tunison, Nick Vaught, Ken Wiering, Beverly Williams, Patricia Williams, and Jon Wooge.

Excused: Judy Alford **Guests:** Jennifer Hundley, Travis Hundley, and Joyce Skelton

Opening: President Maxine Lyons called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM. President Lyons requested a motion that the agenda be adjusted to move President Charles Steger and Vice President for Finance Dwight Shelton to the front, and put Announcements and Commission and Committee Reports after their program. The revised agenda was adopted. Minutes of the February 16 meeting were approved as posted electronically.

Program: President Steger mentioned the recent court case involving the April 16, 2007, shootings, and said, "We will appeal." He then addressed the issues resulting from the members of the General Assembly having gone home without approving a budget and giving a clear indication of financial resources the university will have to work with. The ultimate allocation could vary up or down by several million dollars. Addressing the proposal to change the retirement system, Dr. Steger emphasized that the changes would affect employees who are not fully vested in VRS (those with less than five years service). He then moved on to emphasizing strengths of Virginia Tech in light of relation to recent developments and budget concerns. Dr. Steger said that we have a strong class of incoming freshman for next fall, we have commitments of more than \$450 million in research funding representing a growth of \$50 million in the past year, and only rely on the state for 16 percent of the total university budget. He closed by thanking the staff for its contribution to the strength of the university.

Vice President for Finance, Dwight Shelton, gave an update on the possibilities coming from the General Assembly, addressed employee compensation, explained proposed changes in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), and answered questions about the Paid Time Off proposal. The General Assembly may reconvene a special session after March 21 to resolve the budget. Right now \$200 million of new money is proposed for higher education, while other agencies took cuts. The Governor's budget emphasized transportation and higher education. Compensation adjustments are in both the House and Senate versions of the budget, including a bonus in the first year from possible surplus and a 2% increase in the second. He then explained that more would be known after April 18 about the proposed compromise for changes in VRS. Staff who are fully vested, will see no change in their benefit. Employees hired 2009-14 may be given a choice to stay with VRS or move to a hybrid plan, and new hires after 2014 may be offered a hybrid retirement plan consisting of 30% defined benefit and 65-70% defined contribution. An employee could put in as much as 4% of their salary and the state would match that contribution at a rate of 2.5%. With respect to a question about the proposed change in Paid Time Off, Vice President Shelton responded that changes can be done administratively and do not require legislative approval, so the Governor has decided not to bring the issue before the legislature.

Announcements: Robert Sebek announced the Communications Committee's launch of the new Staff Senate web site. He is still looking for pictures, and suggested that we need a photo person for the Staff Senate.

Senate President Maxine Lyons requested volunteers for the Staff Senate information table at the Employee Wellness and Benefits Fair on April 4, and passed a sign-up sheet.

Delbert Jones, representing the Staff Senate's Policies and Issues Committee, shared that the committee is learning more about the faculty Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) and how its design might be reflected in a similar plan for staff.

Jon Wooge announced that the Elections and Nominations Committee will soon be sending out the ballot for Staff Senate elections after they have a volunteer or nomination for representation to the Commission on Faculty Affairs and another for the Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty. Elections will be in March, and succession of officers will take place July 1.

Leslie Thornton-O'Brien gave a brief outline of the James D. McComas Staff Leadership Seminar and encouraged senators and alternates to register early. This year's seminar will be at the Blacksburg Holiday Inn University on Thursday, May 3. The invitation will be extended to staff of the entire university as well as to staff of universities in states surrounding Virginia after March 22.

Maxine Lyons indicated that she has no confirmed speaker yet for the April or May meetings, and asked for suggestions from the floor. Representatives from Transportation, Research and the Board of Visitors were requested. Specific topics suggested were parking alternatives and payment plans, or energy efficiency.

Old Business: None. **New Business:** None.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Thursday, April 19, at a location yet to be determined. The guest speaker will be announced at a later date.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan L. Archer
Senate Secretary