Meeting of the Staff Advisory Committee to the President  
May 16, 2013  
Randolph Hall Boardroom  

Attending: Elizabeth Dixon, Herbert Frasier, Susan Hallatt, Clara Hodges, Aron Kuch, Jenn McClerklin, Brian McGee, Anne McNeal, Amy Orr, Ashleigh Parr, Katherine Pezzella (ex officio), Ed Pope (ex officio), Jennifer Smith, Marcia White, Frank Budd (SAC 2013-14), Marlene Williams  

Not Attending: Meredith Chance, John Inman  

Marcia White called the meeting to order at 10:35.  

Anne McNeal distributed minutes of the last regular meeting, April 4, and of the two intervening special meetings held April 25 and May 2. All minutes were unanimously approved.  

Old Business  

There was no old business.  

New Business  

President Benson  

MUSC merger - President Benson updated the committee on the status  

- Overwhelming support from the business community in the “New Charleston”  
- Boeing is associated with Charleston nationally  
- In the new economy, the city needs its own research university.  
- There are 28 universities with a footprint in the city.  
- Cannot merge with The Citadel  
- Mayor Riley is “all in” with this  
- The College cannot offer PhD programs unless we offer them in conjunction with a research university.  
- USC and others will step up in Charleston if we don’t  
- USC already has a presence here with their MBA program, store, etc.  
- Positive feedback from the College and the city  
- A committee of trustees, CFOs and Provosts from the two institutions is meeting to explore the opportunities  
- You have to combine the governance  
- It is on a fast track. He expects legislation in the next session to require it.  
- The MUSC Board of Trustees is not enthusiastic.
• Staff will not be cut. Both institutions are understaffed. This is not for the purpose of cost cutting or efficiency. This is not MUSC swallowing the College – just the opposite. The merged institution will be called The College of Charleston.
• The hospital might stay separate.
• It puts us in a better position to increase enrollment in a different area of the city. Eventually we will have 30,000 students with the tuition we need.
• Anticipated obstacles are MUSC Board and USC. We do not want to be a branch campus of USC – the worst thing that could happen to us.
• Laying out a strategy to approach the legislature. Glenn McConnell supports the merger.
• Build the university around the assets of Charleston, not offering degrees in every field; a unique institution.
• Some academic departments will continue to function as they do now. There are no academically redundant departments in the two institutions.
• The College of Charleston Graduate School is understaffed and underfunded.
• Senior faculty and staff at MUSC are very supportive
  o Ethics
  o Psychology
  o Public Health
  o Physics
  o Chemistry

President Benson is very proud of SAC. The College has more transparency. He will do whatever he can to help. Most issues require money, so they must rise to the level of the Board of Trustees. We must have patience.

Marcia presented the question of where SAC might fit in the Board of Trustees structure. President Benson will put SAC on the agenda for the next BOT meeting. We would also like to have a place in a BOT committee - maybe Budget and Finance Committee or the Executive Committee.

Aron asked about the performance evaluations and the EPMS system. How are we going to ensure 100% participation? Ed Pope responded that the EVPs must require 100% from their divisions, including classified and unclassified employees, particularly since raises are based on merit. It is required by state and College policies.

Marcia mentioned the staff salary study. She requested staff involvement in the process instead of the study being conducted separate and apart with the results delivered to the staff. President Benson asked Ed Pope to keep SAC in the loop. Ed will organize a mini advisory committee.

Marcia addressed the communication problem that has been posed previously. There is not a communication problem across the university. Aron said that there is a problem of communication and transparency in Academic Affairs, especially regarding bonuses and merit increases. There was hit-and-miss communication regarding the merit raise process.
Ashleigh Parr clarified that the interim report to the president stated that there was a communication problem across the board, but after surveying the divisions, the problem seems to be localized in the Academic Affairs division.

President Benson stated that all raises should be merit based and everyone should understand what is expected to earn a raise, and why you received a raise or not.

Ed Pope is simplifying the performance evaluation. He said that raises are not always based on merit. If they were consistently based on merit, it would drive completion of the performance evaluation. The state mandates that employees who do not receive evaluations are graded “Satisfactory.” Supervisors should be evaluated on whether or not they complete evaluations.

President Benson pointed out that 30 to 40 faculty and staff have left recently because of inadequate salary. He continued by stating that If there is a merger, there will be equal salaries at MUSC and CofC and that tuition will have to increase. As a research institution, we will have the same tuition as Clemson and USC.

The state limits salary increases to 15%. President Benson is working on our status to free us from these state regulations. Ed Pope said the Higher Education Regulatory Commission will now oversee salary issues.

There was a question about the “staff replacement” item in the proposed budget. It allows for an increase in salary for a new employee coming in. Why is it not used for employee retention? Ed does consider matching an increase in salary to retain an employee. The objection is that an employee has to leave and come back or present a higher offer from another employer to get their salary increased to market rates.

The Staff Salary Survey will enable the Board of Trustees to understand how underpaid we are.

Marcia asked President Benson how we can assist him. The next meeting he will come in with issues to bounce off of the SAC members. Right now he is focused on the MUSC merger. Dixie Plantation is a topic that he will need input on.

President Benson also said we need to look across the divisions and make sure that best practices are being implemented everywhere.

Brian McGee said the Great Workplace Survey results will be publicized in the summer.

Treasurer’s Report

There was nothing new to report.

Subcommittee Reports

The Communication Subcommittee gave the only subcommittee report.

Anne McNeal distributed minutes from the subcommittee meetings of March 28 and April 29.
Anne announced that, although the Staff Awards are being delayed until the next academic year, Steve Osborne has given SAC $5,000 to go ahead and have a Celebration of Staff. The subcommittee is trying to find a location large enough to accommodate all the staff. There was a recommendation to keep the celebration open for two or three hours and gauge attendance. Announce a time during the celebration when a presentation about SAC and its accomplishments will be made.

Temporary Staff Representative Report

Katherine Pezzella represents temporary employees on the issues of salary and performance evaluation only because there is no professional development for them. President Benson assured the group that converting temporary to permanent positions is high on the list of priorities. Katherine is leaving the College and said that continuing as a temp. is not sustainable.

Marcia White adjourned the meeting at 12:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne McNeal
Secretary/Treasurer