Minutes of the Staff Advisory Committee to the President
November 20, 2013
President’s Boardroom

Attending: President George Benson, Walter Brown, Mandi Bryson, Meredith Chance, Carl Crews, Elizabeth Dixon, Susan Hallatt, Clara Hodges, Meredith English Perrone, Amy Orr, Ashleigh Parr, Jessica Rodgers, Phil Stevenson, Ed Pope (ex officio), Brian McGee (ex officio)

Not attending: Rudy Alisauskas, Herbert Frasier, Frank Budd

Ashleigh Parr called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM.

Minutes from the November 13 meeting were approved with one change to remove Mandi from the “not attending list.”

Old Business
Review of items in the Interim Report for President Benson:

Communication
Per the SAC Interim Report submitted to President Benson earlier in 2013, it was suggested to monitor and encourage better communication from EVPs to their departments in order for staff to feel more informed.

Business Affairs creates and distributes an electronic monthly newsletter, but because each division is different, there may be other methods to inform staff on a regular basis of important information. Some Business Affairs staff find the monthly newsletter very effective as it keeps them informed of their division’s news and campus updates. Their newsletters spotlight Business Affairs employees in order to create a sense of community and recognize faces on campus.

Meredith E. Perrone says Marketing & Communications does not have a newsletter but their EVP gathers information and distributes it as needed, much like Institutional Advancement.

Some staff feel fearful of discussing suggestions because of the lack of communication channels. Amy Orr reminded everyone of the email listservs that used to exist: Open Discussion and Classified Ads, which were beneficial for communication since the staff forum doesn’t seem to be driving the conversation like listservs did. President Benson worries that constant emails on listservs could lead to wasted time (referring to the activity on the Faculty/Staff listserv), but he acknowledges there are pros and cons. Neither President Benson nor Ed Pope are familiar with why they were disbanded.

Open Discussion is still available through the online forum, but it doesn’t get much traffic. The lack of participation in the forum creates “clutter” on the Faculty/Staff listserv since this is the main outlet for groups to communicate via email.
Some staff have been instructed by their supervisors to not participate on the current listservs. Some believe there is a potential backlash if they speak out publicly. There is a fear of punishment for speaking up, but listservs would help alleviate this fear.

President Benson feels that there appears to be tension on campus since we are not all equals. Faculty have contracts and feel more comfortable speaking up without worry about backlash whereas staff don’t have contracts and, because there is a chain of command, they feel they have to be careful about what is said. Faculty aren’t as limited when speaking out, and they do utilize their freedom of speech. Faculty have a level of freedom that staff don’t have.

President Benson believes that communication is the easiest thing to criticize. Someone always feels left out or out of touch, so you have to come up with ways that work for most. It’s not easy to make everyone happy.

President Benson will encourage EVPs to do more and may suggest a newsletter in larger divisions to help with communication. A weekly summary with bullets would help keep staff up to speed. He would also like to see information flow upward. The communication between President Benson and EVPs is great; they meet weekly for multiple hours with constant discussion, but more needs to be distributed out into the organization.

SAC members would like to meet with President Benson more often than twice per year, and he agrees. He prefers to meet in person rather than receive a report.

**Action:** President Benson and Brian McGee will talk to Bob Cape about the possibility of re-implementing multiple listservs. A response from President Benson’s action items will be conveyed to SAC at our next meeting.

**Action:** The Staff Advisory Committee asked the President and Brian McGee to champion the importance and needs of Staff and the Staff Advisory seeing as that the committee is new and is trying to create a culture of shared governance.

**Compensation**

Ed Pope is working to get the consultant report back. He should have the final draft of our analysis by next week, and should have the final version shortly thereafter. President Benson wants to convince the Board of Trustees (BOT) to give staff more money, to meet market rates across the board because we are under paid. It has taken years to get the BOT to understand this, and President Benson thinks we have finally made some headway. He is hoping the study will justify the feeling that we are below market, and once we have evidence, we can get money to fund staff more appropriately. Raises will most likely be based on merit (evaluations), not seniority. If everyone is performing at the same level, it will be spread evenly.

EVPs will be given a pool of funds and will have discretion for disseminating it as needed. Salaries have been President Benson’s highest priority. He wants to raise tuition to that of Clemson’s tuition, which would solve our salary issues. There are three ways President Benson says for CoC to get more money: raise tuition, raise enrollment, and increase the percentage of out-of-state students. We don’t have access to any of those three. We can increase enrollment in the north campus and fountain walk.

Ed asked President Benson to speak to the level of temps we have. President Benson says we were abusing the idea of temps, having them for 10-15 years. It can’t be reversed because we don’t have enough state lines. The number of state employees can only grow as rapidly as the state population grows. An accountability-based funding method could be put into place in our state where all 13 state colleges’ budgets
are combined and money will be doled out based on data. Performance-based funding is supported by President Benson, but not the version that Governor Haley has established.

Human Resources is working on permanent employee process still but plans to implement a way to evaluate temporary employees.

**Employee Performance Evaluations**
President Benson has instructed all EVPs to make sure their employees are evaluated annually. Raises are based on evaluations, but those who did not receive evaluations in 2012 were not passed over. Managers of unevaluated employees certified that it wasn’t the employee’s fault. Brian McGee believes that no one lost a raise opportunity.

*Action:* President Benson will review this with the EVPs to ensure someone is held accountable for directors and employees being evaluated.

**Staff Benefits**
**Staff Training:**
There is a state law in place to allow a staff training program. The statute is badly written, and some schools permit 18 hours annually. College of Charleston’s program is less generous than some schools. We have to budget for this benefit at $50,000 per year and we go over budget every year due to tuition increases. The average funds come out of other budgets. Our program was reviewed, and the decision was made that having more funds available for salaries was more important than funding more staff training hours. Auditing a class is not the same as enrollment and does not incur a cost to the institution.

**Access to Fitness Centers:**
The current subsidy for MUSC wellness center may not be needed since the new fitness center is open on campus. Student Services will evaluate hours that have less participation by students in order to potentially create time frames for faculty/staff to use the facility. The new center currently averages 500-600 students per day. Gene Sessoms is tracking the time frames during the fall 2013 semester and January 2014 (may be extended until spring break) to track usage. Usage appears to be similar to that of the Stern and Johnson Fitness Centers. The peak hours for faculty staff at Stern were early hours, lunch time, and 4-5:30 p.m.

*Action:* President Benson requested to have this tracked data at the next SAC meeting with him.

**Staff Awards:**
SAC would like staff awards to have the same dollar amount tied to them as the faculty awards. This request was not presented to the BOT at their August or October meeting, but it will be presented to them at their January meeting. Post January board meeting, the decision by the Board will be communicated to SAC.

**Childcare on the Peninsula:**
SAC has worked with the Faculty Welfare Committee and Memminger to address the need for affordable childcare in downtown Charleston. ECDC has neither the capacity nor schedule to benefit staff since they operate on the student calendar, but infant through kindergarten-aged children don’t have available care options downtown. Many universities do have this availability. Roper Hospital has a childcare option, but we don’t know what option is available for MUSC. Faculty Welfare has done a study on available options and presented it several times. The waiting list for ECDC is in the hundreds currently, and there’s no place to expand ECDC. There has not been an implementable solution suggested.

*Action:* SAC will review the available information and come back to President Benson with a suggestion for a model.
Ashleigh Parr adjourned the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Meredith Chance
Secretary
Staff Advisory Committee to the President