

Staff Senate Meeting

November 20, 2014

Speaker, President M. David Rudd

Four major staff concerns emerged from the session - the financial status of the university, a perceived lack of communication, a perceived lack of concern or recognition for staff, and concern for campus and personal safety.

The university is financially stable, but the administration continues to lobby for full funding of state appropriations and for changes to the funding formula benchmarks that penalize the institution. As sixty three percent of revenue is from tuition, there are new initiatives that are increasing enrollment. The administration is also developing a new budget model that will allow units more autonomy, require responsible and sustainable budgets, and reward imaginative entrepreneurship.

Dr. Rudd suggested that the staff senate assume greater responsibility for communication between the administration and staff. The staff senate will develop an agenda of core issues for each academic year and present those concerns to the administration. Specific issues of communication included unpublicized policy changes, unlisted emails and telephone numbers, and the lack of public forums. Dr. Rudd suggested that policy changes should be communicated to the university with rationale statements. The senate president will bring that recommendation to the policy review board. All emails addressed to President@memphis.edu are answered. Staff will be encouraged to use this email or the staff senate webpage which allows anonymous email. Senate leadership will forward those concerns to the appropriate department. The president has been holding open sessions on his campus listening tour, but many staff members were not aware of the events. The staff senate will sponsor and publicize two town hall meetings with the administration each year.

Many staff members feel individual effort is not noticed or appreciated. Some have assumed additional responsibilities with no increase in pay. There have been no across-the-board increases or one-time bonuses for several years. Dr. Rudd acknowledged the importance of rewarding staff performance, but warned that the legislature will most likely not fund statewide increases. The university now has the ability to award individual merit raises and the new budget model will allow units flexibility to reward outstanding employees as revenues increase. The administration will explore establishing a mechanism for showcasing and praising outstanding employees. Another member asked that the university remain closed a full two weeks during the holidays. President Rudd acknowledged that this was a standard practice at many institutions. This option may be explored for next year. The senate questioned why the budget had been reduced 25% when the group was responsible for funding Staff Appreciation Day. The president authorized restoration of \$1000.

Employee safety was a special concern. Members asked if the university had considered placing cameras in buildings or assigning security officers to buildings such as the library or university center. Bruce Harber will address these concerns at the December meeting.

Action items for Staff Senate

1. Actively promote its role as communication link.
2. Present an annual agenda of core issues to administration for each academic year.
3. Sponsor and schedule two town hall meetings annually for staff and administration.
4. Recommend to the policy review board that changes be communicated to the university

Action items for Administration

1. Explore mechanisms for recognizing outstanding employee performance
2. Explore closing the university for two weeks during holidays