Murray State University Staff Congress
Draft Minutes for August 17, 2011
Curris Center: Room 304, Applied Science Building, North Tower

PRESENT: Shanna Burgess, Tami Dandeneau, Susan D’Angelo, Laura Dziekonski, Liz Fain, Orville Herndon, Lana Jennings, Jerry O’Bryan, Chuck Plummer, Debbie Plummer, Sheri Riddle, Tressa Ross, Billy R. Russell, Stephanie Totty, Tim Williams, Lisa Willis, Dwaine Willoughby, Gina Winchester, Janeen Winters, John Young, and Staff Regent Phil Schooley. Guests: Jackie Dudley, Senior Director of Accounting and Financial Services; Dr. Bonnie Higginson, Provost; Dr. Marcia Hobbs, Dean of the School of Nursing; Tom Hoffacker, Director of Human Resources, Josh Jacobs, Chief of Staff; Dr. Susan Muller, Dean of Health Sciences and Human Services; Dr. Don Robertson, Vice-President for Student Services; and Jason Willoughby.

CALL TO ORDER: Staff Congress President Gina Winchester called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

REPORTS FROM SPECIAL GUESTS:
Dr. Bonnie Higginson: Dr. Higginson, Provost, asked Gina to notify her of any topics Staff Congress members would like her to address at the group’s meetings. She introduced two new deans: Dr. Marcia Hobbs, Dean of the School of Nursing and Dr. Susan Muller, Dean of Health Sciences and Human Services.

Dr. Marcia Hobbs said she has received a warm welcome at Murray State. Beginning with the fall 2012 semester, MSU will offer a doctorate of nursing degree. She reported on accreditations that have been received for the program and upcoming accreditation processes for other programs. She is looking forward to a busy and productive year.

Dr. Susan Muller said her college is in the early stages of determining any needs and possible new programs to be offered. She added that everyone has been very welcoming toward her.

Dr. Higginson said that although the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools re-accreditation process doesn’t begin until 2014, the university has already begun preparing for it, including participating in a recent video conference session with the SACS liaison in Atlanta.

Josh Jacobs: Josh Jacobs, Chief of Staff, noted that the school year started well yesterday. Although he has already been asked about enrollment numbers, final figures won’t be available until October. Dr. Robertson’s office, the Bursar’s Office, Financial Aid, the Office of Enrollment Management, and other departments are working with students from last semester to resolve problems delaying their return this semester. Josh welcomes questions anytime.

Jerry O’Bryan said his daughter Alesha has spoken highly of Racer Academy. Josh explained the various components of the program. Dr. Bonnie Higginson complimented Alesha’s work in the program.

Dr. Don Robertson: Dr. Don Robertson, Vice-President for Student Services, agreed with Josh that Great Beginnings and the start of the semester went well. He commended Facilities Management, Food Services, and Housing staff, for their work to prepare the campus for students. He also thanked the many staff who helped students with moving. He asked Congress members to relay to their co-workers his appreciation for their efforts. He referred to the We are Racers video shown at the Faculty and Professional Staff Luncheon last week, thanking everyone for the assistance and hospitality shown to students as reflected in their testimonials on the video. He welcomes questions.

Billy Russell said this is the smoothest start to the semester he has seen. Jerry O’Bryan added he has heard the same comment from Facilities Management staff as well.

Orville Herndon asked about the possibility of having a ramp installed on the front of Hart Hall for those needing wheelchair access and secondly, to ease the move-in process. The current ramp is located on the side of the building and requires users to make a 90-degree turn. Dr. Robertson responded that installing a new ramp can be examined. He added that he noticed a Staff Congress member take a chair to someone needing to rest during Saturday’s move-in.

Dr. Robertson reminded staff that an intervention team exits for students experiencing difficulties. Staff may contact Student Services or refer students to that office. On October 6, at 6:15 p.m. in Cutchin Field, the Take Back the Night event will emphasize that MSU is committed to having the safest campus possible and that violence is not acceptable. Jerry O’Bryan said he heard a parent comment during Saturday’s student move-in that the low crime rate was a factor in his student’s decision to attend Murray State.

Tom Hoffacker: Tom Hoffacker, Director of Human Resources, said he has received many questions about the consequences policy for late leave and late time reporting and late approval. He elaborated on the policy and complimented Payroll staff for
their efforts in working with payroll loans and pay for late time report submissions. He introduced Jackie Dudley, Senior Director of Accounting and Financial Services, to answer questions regarding Payroll.

Discussion and questions followed. One specific concern is that when combing pay for two time periods, the tax rate is higher than it would be if the pay for the two time periods had been issued separately. Also, employees must wait an additional two weeks for pay when time reports are submitted by the deadline but not approved on-time. Payroll loans for time reports submitted or approved late are less than the amount of pay anticipated. Also of concern are the number and types of penalties applied to employees submitting late time reports compared to those applied to persons who are late in approving time reports. It was noted some approvers do not have proxies. Jackie Dudley responded that if an approver is unavailable to approve time reports before the deadline, employees may call Payroll to notify that office of the situation. Comments were made that an employee has to check myGate multiple times to see if a time report has been approved; approvers must check myGate multiple times to see if all the time reports they are to approve have been submitted. No notification is sent to employees when their time reports have been approved nor to approvers when time reports have been submitted. Jackie noted that reports listing those who submit or approve time reports late are seen by deans and vice-presidents.

Gina thanked Jackie for answering questions about the payroll process. Laura Dziekonski expressed appreciation for the payroll loan offered by the university.

Tom Hoffacker responded to a question raised at the July Staff Congress meeting. In the July meeting minutes, in the Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee Report, third paragraph, Billy Russell noted that some employees have asked why retired employees returning to work at MSU are unable to join the Sick Leave Bank. At today’s Staff Congress meeting, Tom responded that regular full and regular part-time employees are eligible to join the Sick Leave Bank. Often, retirees return to work at MSU in temporary positions which are not eligible to participate in the Sick Leave Bank.

Also at the July Staff Congress meeting, in the Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee Report, in the second paragraph, Gina Winchester said that Tom Hoffacker would be presenting to the Board of Regents for approval proposed changes to the Sick Leave Policy. Today, Tom noted that because changes to the Sick Leave Policy affect other policies, proposed modifications will be presented at a later meeting of the Board of Regents.

Tom said tuition waivers to be used for the fall semester are due August 22, as announced in Roundabout and Personnel Matters.

APPROVAL OF JULY MINUTES: Laura Dziekonski noted a correction in the July minutes. Under Reports from Special Guests, second paragraph, the first sentence, the “or” in Board or Regents” should be “of.” John Young made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Jerry O’Bryan seconded, and the motion carried.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Laura Dziekonski presented the July Treasurer’s Report. Debbie Plummer made a motion to approve the July Treasurer’s Report as presented. Dwain Willoughby seconded, and the motion carried.

Staff Regent Report: Staff Regent Phil Schooley reported that the Board of Regents will have a retreat on August 25 at Lake Barkley Lodge and a meeting on August 26 in Hopkinsville. The meeting will be streamed live via internet. He will notify Congress members when he receives the agenda. Two new board members will be sworn-in: Jenny L. Sewell and Student Regent Jeremiah Johnson.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:
Executive Committee: Gina said all Congress members attended the Staff Appreciation Luncheon on August 9. She congratulated Chuck Plummer, Phil Schooley, and Dwaine Willoughby for receiving Staff Excellence Awards. She read a thank you note from Staff Congress Secretary Kim Cottingham. Gina reported that thank you notes were hand-delivered to the luncheon vendors; a few notes had to be mailed. She will ask Catherine Sivills to bring to a Staff Congress meeting, the video shown at the Faculty and Professional Staff Luncheon. She will also ask her to talk about possible changes to the staff survey and the university’s ranking in results of the “Best Places to Work” Survey conducted by Modern Think.

Gina reminded everyone that Maya Angelou will be speaking at the CFSB Center on August 24, at 8:00 p.m. Discounted tickets for MSU employees must be purchased at the CFSB Center. The discount is not available on-line.

The Breathitt Veterinary Center Staff Recognition Luncheon will be held on September 19. Gina, Staff Congress Vice-President John Young, and Staff Regent Phil Schooley will attend.
The Faculty and Staff Leadership Council will meet with Dr. Dunn on September 15. She will notify Congress members when she receives the agenda.

She reported on the August 9 meeting of current and out-going Staff Congress Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs. She distributed copies of the notes of the meeting. Details of topics discussed at that meeting will be presented during today’s various committee reports.

**Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee:** Debbie Plummer reported that the University-wide Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee will meet on August 19.

**Credentials and Elections Committee:** Orville Herndon said the committee will meet on September 7, at 1:30 p.m., in the Cumberland Room of the Curris Center. Topics to be discussed include on-line voting and the Staff Regent election to be held in March 2012. Interested persons may attend the meeting.

**Staff Recognition Committee:** Dana Howard was unable to attend today’s meeting due to her department being in the process of relocating.

**Staff Special Events Committee:** Janeen Winters announced that Congress President Gina Winchester would like to have an informal gathering to allow Staff Congress members to become acquainted with one another. Event suggestions may be given to Janeen, Gina, or other members of the Staff Special Events Committee. The committee would like to determine the event before setting a date, but hopes to have something planned for September or October. Discussion followed.

Gina said someone has brought to her attention that a section of seating should be reserved for staff members at the staff appreciation football and basketball games. Debbie Plummer added that at those games, an announcement could be made recognizing the staff and faculty. Discussion followed.

**Communications Committee:** Laura Dziekonski said the deadline to submit items for the next Staff Congress newsletter is August 25. Gina added that the newsletter should include the Student Affairs phone number so staff know where to refer students in need of assistance. Also, a note should be included informing staff to call Payroll if they think their approvers might not be able to approve time reports before the deadline.

**Working Conditions Committee:** Jerry O’Bryan said the committee will meet at August 24, at 8:00 a.m., in the Transportation Building.

**Late Approval of Time Reports:** Jerry noted that the late approval of time reports is a significant issue for many employees. Gina said Staff Congress can issue a resolution concerning this topic. Gina added that the Working Conditions Committee will discuss this at its upcoming meeting. Interested persons may attend that meeting.

**Buyback of Unused Vacation Days:** The Working Conditions Committee will look into this.

**Staff Congress Foundation Book Scholarship Committee:** Debbie Plummer said the next committee meeting is tentatively set for August 24.

**AD-HOC COMMITTEES**

**Staff Congress Handbook Review Committee:** No report.

**UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITTEES:**

**Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee:** No report.

**Intercollegiate Athletic Council:** No report.

**Naming Campus Facilities:** No report.

**Judicial Board:** No report.

**Sick Leave Appeals Committee:** No report.
OLD BUSINESS:
Staff Congress Banner: Laura Dziekonski read the price quotes for a Staff Congress banner to display at various Staff Congress and university events. She will ask about the price of stand to hold banner. Discussion followed as to what to have printed on the banner. Suggestions may be emailed to her.

Textbook Scholarship Application Publication: Debbie Plummer asked that the Textbook Scholarship be publicized in the Staff Congress newsletter, Roundabout, and The MSU News. Laura responded that she will submit the announcements to Roundabout and The MSU News and include an announcement in the Staff Congress newsletter.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT:
Gina reminded everyone that the next Staff Congress meeting will be held in the Curris Center Barkley Room on September 21.

Tim Williams made a motion to adjourn. Orville Herndon seconded, and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 3:03 p.m.