



Staff Congress

**Draft Minutes for January 15, 2025
Wells Hall, Room 118, and Zoom**

Present: Dedrick Brooks, Tami Dandeneau, Duane Dycus, Jodi Hanneman, Gerry Harris, Orville Herndon, Dayna Hutchinson, Joshua Hutson, Trish Lofton, David Looney, Jeremy McKeel, Amanda Mansfield, Audrey Neal, Kim Newbern, Tressa Ross, David Shelton, Mary Steely, Rachel Stewart, Kristen Swisher, Justin Thomas, Joshua Tillson, Lisa Willis, Casey Workman

Absent: B.J. Johnson, Matthew Jones

Guests: Courtney Hixon, Director, Human Resources; Dr. Don Robertson, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dr. David Wilson, Staff Regent

CALL TO ORDER: Staff Congress President Audrey Neal called the meeting to order.

REPORTS FROM SPECIAL GUESTS PRESENT:

Dr. Don Robertson, Vice President of Student Affairs: Dr. Ron Robertson provided an update on enrollment for the recent winter term, and for the spring and fall 2025 semesters. Final enrollment numbers for the spring semester will be available at a later date. Admitted Student Weekend is scheduled for February 1.

The Student Engagement and Success Office is contacting students who are eligible to register for the spring semester but have not registered. Staff in the Office of Recruitment, along with college deans and chairs, are writing notes to admitted students who have not registered for classes.

Courtney Hixon, Director of Human Resources: Courtney Hixon said an email was sent to staff with information about programs offered by Wayne Corporation. A Lunch and Learn session is scheduled for February 11, on the topic of screening and prevention for good health. The session will be held on Zoom. Cholesterol screenings will be held on February 19. On February 4 and May 7, administrative support trainings will be held on Zoom. Registration information for these events will be sent to staff.

President Neal asked the status of the proposed revision to the overtime and callback policy.

Ms. Hixon said that Human Resources will follow-up to determine the next steps for the policy.

Staff Regent Report: Staff Regent Dr. David Wilson reported that the Budget Advisory Committee met on January 14. President Neal will provide an update on that meeting later in this Staff Congress meeting. The December Board of Regents meeting consisted of audit information and the ground-breaking for renovation of the CFSB Center. Regent Wilson will send staff a summary of the Board of Regents meeting. The next Board of Regents meeting will be held in March. He will send the agenda when he receives it. Staff may contact him with questions.

Dr. Don Robertson added that Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration events are scheduled for January 20. He encouraged staff to attend the breakfast and to participate in the MLK, Jr., Day of Service Racers Challenge opportunity to donate food and other items to community agencies.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Justin Thomas made a motion to approve the December 2024 minutes as presented. Joshua Hutson seconded. President Neal asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, she called for the vote. The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Tressa Ross presented the December 2024 Treasurer's Report. Tami Dandeneau made a motion to approve the December 2024 Treasurer's Report. Trish Lofton seconded. President Neal asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, she called for the question, and the motion carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Executive Committee: President Neal reported that at its January meeting, the Executive Committee discussed feedback received for the Staff Reception held in December. The feedback has been forwarded to the Office of the Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services. Ms. Neal thanked Jackie Dudley, Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services, and her office for sponsoring the Staff Reception.

The name of Golden Horseshoe Award, which was introduced at the Staff Reception, has been changed to the Racer Spirit Award to avoid confusion with the Murray State Alumni Association Golden Horseshoe Award. Ten nominations have been received for the Racer Spirit Award. The Staff Congress Communication Committee will promote the award on Staff Congress social media.

Ms. Neal said that each Staff Congress member was emailed the names and email addresses of staff constituency groups. Staff Congress members will be able to email the constituents with updates and information from Staff Congress, as well as request input from staff.

Credentials and Elections Committee: Orville Herndon reported that the Credentials and Elections Committee is in the process of contacting staff who received votes in the April 2024 Staff Congress Election to ask those staff if they are willing to complete vacant terms on Staff Congress. At the next Staff Congress meeting, the committee will present the dates for the 2025 Staff Congress Election.

Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee: Tressa Ross said the Executive Committee discussed how to recognize Racer Spirit Award recipients, such as presenting them with recognition certificates. The committee will discuss the topic further.

Communications Committee: No report.

President Neal said that Staff Congress members can send items for publication to the Communications Committee using the bit.ly link that was provided to Staff Congress members during the fall semester.

Working Conditions Committee: No report.

Staff Survey Committee: Dedrick Brooks presented results from the 5-question survey sent to staff in December. He said Tressa Ross, Chair of the Staff Congress Recognition and Special Events Committee, suggested that because the majority of staff who answered the brief survey indicated that they would not be interested in attending a family event in the summer or at the holidays, the Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee will discuss other ways to recognize staff. Discussion followed.

Mr. Brooks thanked Tressa Ross and B.J. Johnson for suggesting that a brief survey be sent to staff. Staff Congress members can send the Staff Survey Committee suggestions for questions to be included on future brief staff surveys. The full length 2024-2025 Staff Survey is ready to be distributed to staff. Discussion followed regarding when to send the survey to staff.

The group also discussed sending a brief survey to staff to ask what topics they would like to discuss at upcoming Staff Congress listening sessions.

President Neal asked if, due to the number of responses to the questions on the short survey about the remote and flexible work policy, should Staff Congress schedule a forum to provide information about the remote and flexible work policy?

Mr. Brooks replied that, in response to the survey question that asked staff if they understand how to use the flexible work policy, 43% of respondents indicated that they do not understand the policy; 30% somewhat understand the policy; 17% said they understand; 9% said they strongly understand.

The group consensus was to schedule a forum to provide information to staff about the remote and flexible work policy.

Staff Regent Wilson said that discussion is needed concerning staff who were required by their supervisors to work on campus during inclement weather when the campus was operating remotely, although those staff could have worked remotely. He added that, at times, the announcement for remote work due to campus closure the following day has been made after university office hours, when staff have left the office for the day. He asked that notice of remote operations due to inclement weather for the following work day be announced before staff leave campus for the day so that they may take work equipment home to be used to work remotely.

President Neal said she will schedule a listening session/forum for mid-February.

Textbook Scholarship Committee: Joshua Hutson said the Textbook Scholarship Committee will meet after February 1, the due date for spring semester scholarship applications, to select a scholarship recipient.

President Neal asked if the textbook scholarship is in need of funds.

The committee will schedule a rebate night to raise funds for the textbook scholarship and for the professional development fund.

Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee: Trish Lofton reported that the Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee reviewed the inclement weather policies of Murray State University and peer universities. The committee also reviewed Murray State's remote work policy. Earlier this January, during the closure of campus facilities due to inclement weather, staff and faculty were instructed to work remotely. Students had not returned to campus for the semester at that time. During the previous academic year, on a day of remote work due to inclement weather, faculty and students were instructed to work remotely, but some staff were instructed to work on campus. The committee discussed that if, after students have returned to campus and additional weather-related remote work days for faculty and students occur, non-essential staff should also be instructed to work remotely. When local and area schools are closed for inclement weather and faculty and students are not required to be on campus, requiring non-essential staff to travel to campus is a safety concern. Discussion followed concerning determining which employees are essential and need to work on campus when the campus is operating remotely due to inclement weather.

President Neal added that if staff are required to be on campus again during inclement weather when faculty and students are not required to do so, then Staff Congress may consider developing a proposal to address the concern.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee: Amanda Mansfield reported on the attendance and sessions offered at Staff Success Week which was held January 7, 8, and 9. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee will meet in February to discuss feedback received from Staff Success Week attendees. The committee will also discuss possible topics for the spring 2026 Staff Success Week.

President Neal said that the feedback received from the 2025 Staff Success Week includes suggestions for sessions during the next Success Week. She would like the committee to schedule a Staff Success Week for the summer of 2025, possibly in early June.

Ms. Mansfield thanked the session presenters and attendees. Discussion followed concerning topics for the next Staff Success Week. Staff Congress members complimented the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee members for organizing Staff Success Week.

President Neal said that during the upcoming session of the Kentucky legislature, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee will monitor the session for any bills that would affect higher education. Jordan Smith, Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs, will also be monitoring the legislative session for the bills that would affect the university.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITTEES:

Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee: Orville Herndon said the Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee will meet on January 31, at 8:15 a.m., via Zoom. The committee will be discussing the insurance plan for 2026. Feedback regarding open enrollment can be sent to Mr. Herndon and he will forward it to the committee.

President Neal said that employee costs for 2026 insurance will increase as part of the plan to distribute the price increase across three years instead of implementing the entire increase in one year. The increase is part of the plan that moves the university closer to 80/20 employer/employee cost-sharing.

Mr. Herndon said that the insurance costs are based partially on health care expenditures. Marsh McLennan, health and wellness consultant, may be able to provide suggestions to minimize insurance policy costs increases.

Intercollegiate Athletic Council: No report.

Naming Campus Facilities Committee: Dedrick Brooks reported that the following naming proposals were approved at the December 2024 Board of Regents meeting: the CFSB Center Courtside Club at the CFSB Center; the Robert L. and Karen Miller Jackson Hall in the School of Nursing and Health Professions; the Murray State University Easley Conservation Stewardship Area in Calloway County; the Badgett Teacher Education Program in the College of Education and Human Services; the Dr. Thomas B. Logan and Jo Lloyd Logan Hall in the Biological Sciences Building in the Jesse D. Jones College of Science, Engineering, and Technology; and the Oleta E. Burkeen Nursing Essential Skills and Health Assessment Lab to be located in the new nursing building.

Judicial Board: No report.

Sick Leave Appeals Committee: No report.

International Studies Advisory Committee: No report.

Budget Advisory Committee: President Neal reported that at the January 14 Budget Advisory Committee, University President Dr. Robert (Bob) Jackson said the university is waiting for the CPE to decide the tuition cap increase for the upcoming academic years. The CPE will make the decision at its April 2025 meeting, prior to the April 28 meeting of the Budget Advisory Committee. At the April 28 meeting, the full budget will be presented to the Budget Advisory Committee. The budget will be presented to the university community at the April 30 town hall meeting. The January Budget Advisory Committee meeting included a legislative update and update on continuing capital projects, budget calendar highlights, revenue streams, implementing the third year of the four-year scholarship model, mandated waivers, performance funding, and expenditure priorities. Expenditure priorities listed included implementing the second phase of the compensation review, cost-of-living increase, faculty promotion, faculty and staff awards, and health and wellness plans. Also discussed were fixed costs, and programs with low or no enrollment.

Staff Regent Dr. Wilson said that a request is being made for the CPE to set tuition increases based on a dollar amount instead of a percentage. A tuition increase cap based on a percentage is disproportionate due to the varying tuition amounts among Kentucky universities. Dr. Wilson and President Neal summarized Kentucky legislative bills that would affect universities. Persons with questions about those bills or seeking additional information may contact Jordan Smith, Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs.

Shared Governance Committee: President Neal said a Faculty Staff Leadership Committee Meeting will be held in February.

Parking Advisory Committee: No report.

AD HOC COMMITTEES:

Parking Benefit Committee: Duane Dycus discussed the information the Parking Benefit Committee members have found when researching parking benefits offered to employees for years of service at peer universities. Discussion followed.

Business List Revision Committee: No report.

Staff Regent Bylaws Revision Committee: No report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

INFORMATION ITEMS: Trish Lofton asked staff to refer students with food insecurity to the Racers Helping Racers Food Pantry. Curbside service is available. A list of items requested for donation is available on the Racers Helping Racers website [Racers Helping Racers Food Pantry | Murray State University](#).

ADJOURNMENT: Orville Herndon made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded, and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned.