MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

Staff Congress

**Minutes for November 19, 2025—Approved by Staff Congress December 17, 2025**
**Wells Hall, Room 118, and Zoom**

**Present:** Emily Asher, Ken Ashlock, Dedrick Brooks, Hannah Durbin, Duane Dycus, Gerry Harris, Abby Hensley, Orville Herndon, Dayna Hutchinson, BJ Johnson, Trish Lofton, David Looney, Carlos Lopez, Jeremy McKeel, Kim Newbern, Tressa Ross, David Shelton, Mary Steely, Rachel Stewart, Kristen Swisher, Justin Thomas, Karami Underwood, Lisa Willis, Casey Workman

**Absent:** Kelsey Johnson, Audrey Neal, Jenni Todd, Brian Williams

**Guests:** Dr. Jamarco Clark, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, University of Illinois-Springfield; Dr. Ron K. Patterson, University President; Dr. Don Robertson, Vice President of Student Affairs; Lauren Smee, Wellness Plan Coordinator; Haley Stedelin, Associate Director of Human Resources; Dr. David Wilson, Staff Regent

**CALL TO ORDER:** Vice President Jeremy McKeel called the meeting to order.

**REPORTS FROM SPECIAL GUESTS PRESENT:**
**Dr. Ron K. Patterson, University President:** University President Dr. Ron Patterson introduced Dr. Jamarco Clark, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Illinois–Springfield. Dr. Clark is participating in a leadership program for aspiring university presidents and chancellors. He selected Dr. Patterson to be his mentor and is on campus to shadow Dr. Patterson.

Dr. Patterson provided updates on the executive searches in-progress. Members of Staff Congress have been appointed to those search committees. The Provost search has been narrowed to four candidates. Those candidates will be on campus the first week in December. The Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services (VPFAS) search has been narrowed to six candidates. The candidates will be interviewed on November 20 and 21. Candidates for VPFAS will be on campus in December.

The Racer Spirit Listening and Learning Tour has concluded. Notes from the Racer Spirit Listening and Learning Tour were sent to faculty and staff. Art prepared by university faculty is being displayed on the first floor of Oakhurst. The display was launched on November 11. Employees will have another opportunity to view the artwork at the Christmas Open House.

Dr. Patterson has launched the Find Dr. Patterson on Campus program on social media. Students who find Dr. Patterson on campus can receive a $5 gift card to use at Racer Dining venues or at the University Store. He thanked David Looney, Executive Director for Auxiliary Services, and Emily Asher, Assistant Director for Auxiliary Services, for arranging the gift cards. He noted that this is a time of year of food insecurity. He asked staff to encourage students to view the social media posts to find Dr. Patterson.

Dr. Patterson has been working with the Commission on Retention and Persistence to identify additional help for staff and faculty as relates to student enrollment and retention. AI will be used to assist employees with productivity and efficiency.

**Dr. Don Robertson, Vice President of Student Affairs:** Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Don Robertson reported on the number of undergraduate and graduate students admitted for the fall 2026 semester. He discussed housing applications and transfer and international student enrollment numbers. Earlier in November, the university hosted over

300 students at the largest Racer Day in the university's history. He recognized the Admissions Office staff for increasing the number of visits to schools. The number of school visits contributes to enrollment. Dr. Robertson said that Dr. Patterson emailed the students who attended Racer Day. Dr. Robertson talked about enrollment for the upcoming winter and spring terms.

The Senior Breakfast was held earlier in the week. The Almost Midnight Breakfast is scheduled for December 7. The First-Gen Student Celebration was held on November 5.

**Haley Stedelin, Associate Director of Human Resources:** Associate Director of Human Resources Haley Stedelin said the calendar of university holidays has been published. She said that some students experience food insecurity. The holidays can be a stressful time of year for some people. Employees and members of their households can access resources for dealing with stress through the Employee Assistance Program through Wayne Corporation. A schedule is being developed for the candidates for Provost and the candidates for Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services who will be visiting campus. The schedule will provide opportunities for staff, faculty, and students to meet the candidates and to provide feedback to the search committees.

**Lauren Smee, Wellness Plan Coordinator:** Wellness Plan Coordinator Lauren Smee said an additional A1C screening was held November 18, as part of the Racer Wellness events. She thanked Murray Calloway County Hospital for providing the screening. Employees who participated in the Wellness Pledge for 2025 and completed Phase 2 will have access to the Sonic Boom wellness vendor through the end of 2025. The link to Sonic Boom is available in myGate, in the Human Resources section. Employees who have registered for the Wellness Pledge beginning with the 2026 year will receive an email in December 2025, with instructions for accessing Sonic Boom. Human Resources staff are available to answer questions about the wellness vendor. A Lunch and Learn is scheduled for February 4, to discussion Sonic Boom. Ms. Smee said she appreciates Staff Congress representatives' forwarding this information to their constituents.

A request was made for an email to be sent to employees with resources for those experiencing difficulties during the holidays.

Ms. Stedelin said she will prepare an email with that information. The email will be sent to Staff Congress President Audrey Neal to forward to Staff Congress representatives for distribution to their constituents.

Dr. Patterson asked that the email include community resources for those experiencing food insecurity.

Kim Newbern added that Dr. Don Robertson asked her to remind staff about the Racers Helping Racers food pantry which is used by many students. Contributions can be made by using the Amazon Wish List or through payroll deduction.

Tressa Ross asked that an email be sent to employees with information on how to donate to Racers Helping Racers.

Dr. Robertson asked staff to remind students of the availability of the Racers Helping Racers pantry.

Trish Lofton added that the pantry also provides hygiene items.

**Staff Regent Report:** Staff Regent Dr. David Wilson encouraged staff to inform students of resources and to be aware of students who may be uncomfortable going home over Christmas break. The Board of Regents will meet on December 12. Commencement is scheduled for December 13. Both events will be live-streamed. He thanked staff for their work. He asked staff to be mindful of students and employees who have difficulty during the holidays due to having lost loved ones.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Abby Hensley made a motion to approve the October 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes. Trish Lofton seconded. Vice President McKeel asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, he called for the vote. The motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT:**

**Approval of September 2025 Treasurer's Report:** Orville Herndon made a motion to approve the September 2025 Treasurer's Report. Dedrick Brooks seconded. Mr. McKeel asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, he called for the question, and the motion carried.

**Approval of October 2025 Treasurer's Report:** The October Treasurer's Report was delayed. It will be presented at the December meeting for approval.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Executive Committee:** Trish Lofton reported that the Staff Congress committee chairs attended the November meeting of the Executive Committee. At the meeting, the officers offered support to the chairs and their committees.

**Credentials and Elections Committee:** Orville Herndon said that Staff Congress has two vacancies. The Credentials and Elections Committee has contacted the two staff members who received the next highest number of votes in the April 2025 Staff Congress Election. The committee is waiting for a decision from the two staff members as to whether or not they will accept appointment to Staff Congress to complete the remainder of the vacant terms.

**Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee:** Kim Newbern said the Children's Christmas Party is scheduled for December 6, 1:00-3:00 p.m., in the Curris Center Grand Ballroom. A Murray State men's basketball game is scheduled at the same time. Ms. Newbern has contacted Casey Rowe, Residential College Association (RCA) Advisor, to ask if the time of the children's party should be changed. The RCA has requested that Staff Congress host the registration table and provide mini candy canes for the party. Mini candy canes may be brought to Ms. Newbern's office on the third floor of the Curris Center by December 3.

The Staff Recognition Holiday Reception will be held on December 16, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., in the Curris Center Grand Ballroom. Audrey Neal sent a flyer for the event to Communications Committee Chair Jeremy McKeel. Mr. McKeel has posted the flyer on Staff Congress social media. Input from staff, such as requests for gluten-free options, was considered when planning the reception.

David Looney said the University Store will have the annual Faculty and Staff Appreciation Sale on the day of the Staff Reception.

**Communications Committee:** No report.

**Working Conditions Committee:** BJ Johnson said the Working Conditions Committee has discussed the information received to-date from peer universities regarding flexible work schedules and arrangements and summer work schedules. The committee plans to meet in January to prepare information to present to Staff Congress in February.

**Staff Survey Committee:** Dedrick Brooks reported that the Staff Survey Committee met in October to discuss potential updates to the upcoming Staff Survey. The survey will be uploaded to the Qualtrics survey platform. A brief survey was sent to staff to ask for feedback concerning the Sick Leave Policy.

The committee plans to distribute brief surveys quarterly. Questions for the quarterly surveys may be sent to Mr. Brooks.

**Textbook Scholarship Committee:** No report.

**Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee:** Trish Lofton said that she emailed Assistant Vice President for Finance Wendy Cain with questions regarding employee tuition waivers. The questions included ask the order tuition waivers are applied in relation to financial aid, and which fees have tangible expenses associated with them.

Discussion followed, including a request to make the tuition waiver form available on myGate.

Ms. Lofton added that the Murray State tuition waivers are a great benefit because they are available for a certain number of courses each year. At some peer institutions, tuition waivers are for a certain number of course hours.

**Community Involvement and Access Committee:** Vice President McKeel read the report submitted by Community Involvement and Access Committee Chair Kristen Swisher who was unable to attend this portion of the Staff Congress meeting. The committee met on November 10, and set tentative dates of May 18-22, 2026, for the next Staff Success Week. The event will have in-person and online sessions. The committee plans to work with the Staff Congress Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee to schedule an event to start the May 2026 Staff Success Week. The committee will meet in December to continue planning Staff Success Week.

Dr. Patterson asked what Staff Success Week is.

Duane Dycus replied that Staff Success Week offers training sessions for staff. Some of the sessions are held in-person and others meet over Zoom.

**UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITTEES:**
**Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee:** Orville Herndon said the Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee will meet on November 21, at 9:30 a.m., on Zoom. The committee will begin discussing insurance for 2027. Feedback regarding the Sonic Boom wellness platform can be sent to Mr. Herndon to forward to the committee. Questions for the Insurance and Benefits Committee may be sent to Mr. Herndon.

Requests for minutes of the Insurance and Benefits Committee meetings may be sent to Trish Lofton. Requests to view the Zoom recordings of the meetings may be sent to Mr. Herndon.

**Intercollegiate Athletic Council:** No report.

**Naming Campus Facilities Committee:** No report.

**Judicial Board:** No report.

**Sick Leave Appeals Committee:** No report.

**International Studies Advisory Committee:** No report.

**Budget Advisory Committee:** No report.

**Shared Governance Committee:** No report.

**Parking Advisory Committee:** Duane Dycus reported on the Parking Advisory Committee meeting that was held earlier in November. The committee discussed on-going construction and safety. Some small parking lots will be closed temporarily during the installation of new windows. The new parking lot on 16th street is open. Additional handicapped parking spaces will be available in front of Blackburn Science Building. The status of the parking permit fee structure was discussed. The committee discussed the Parking Benefits for Years-of-Service resolution that was submitted by Staff Congress.

Faculty Senate has chosen not to join the resolution for Parking Benefits for Years-of-Service at this time. Reasons cited included waiting until a new Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services has been hired. Faculty Senate would also like to determine whether or not the parking permit cost for employees who must purchase a parking permit would be

affected if a benefit for years-of-service is implemented. Staff Congress has opted to move forward with the submission of the Parking Benefits for Years-of-Service Resolution.

The Parking Advisory Committee discussed the possibility of pro-rating or refunding a portion of the parking permit fee to those who do not remain employed at the university for the entire year. According to Murray State University's Parking Regulations, pro-rating or refunding portions of the parking permit fee is not an option. Employees can choose to pay for the permit through monthly payroll deduction.

For persons needing to use loading zones affected by construction, Parking Services can assist with loading zone access if contacted in advance. Visitor parking at the Lowry Center is still needed due to the number of visitors to Pogue Library.

Faculty asked if the small lot behind the engineering building could be changed from faculty/staff and student parking to only faculty/staff parking. Mr. Dycus' understanding is that Parking Services is going to consider changing that lot to only faculty/staff parking.

Tickets are being issued to student vehicles parked in the "shark tank" lot behind Blackburn Science Building. The committee also discussed the possibility of adding additional blue zone/employee parking spaces to the row of parking behind Tap 216.

Staff Congress members asked about the possibility of a crosswalk between the Howton Agricultural and Engineering Building and the new parking lot on 16th Street. Also discussed was the increase in the number of pedestrians and scooters traveling on Waldrop Drive between Station 74 and campus and the resulting safety concerns for students walking and using scooters on that road.

Mr. Dycus said he was made aware after the Parking Advisory Committee of individuals parking on the grass, and other issues in the lot next to the Ruby Simpson Child Development Center on campus. He will relay those concerns to Parking Services.

**Affirmative Action Committee:** No report.

**AD HOC COMMITTEES:**
**Business List Revision Committee:** Dayna Hutchinson reported that the Business List revision is finished. The updated list has been sent to Charley Allen, Director of Web Management and Digital Marketing, to post to the Staff Congress Business Discount page.

**Staff Regent Bylaws Revision Committee:** No report.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**
**Approval of 2025-2026 Updated Committee Assignments:** The updated 2025-2026 Staff Congress Committee Assignments document was emailed to Staff Congress earlier in November. Trish Lofton made a motion to approve the updated 2025-2026 Staff Congress Committee Assignments. The motion was seconded. Mr. McKeel asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, he called for the vote. The motion carried.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**
The Almost Midnight Breakfast is schedule for December 7, 8:00-10:00 p.m., in Winslow Dining Hall.

A Racer Spirit Award will be distributed after the meeting adjourns.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Gerry Harris made a motion to adjourn. Trish Lofton seconded, and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned.

A Racer Award certificate was given to a Staff Congress member to present to the award nominee.