MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

Staff Congress

Minutes for January 21, 2026 --Approved by Staff Congress February 18, 2026
Wells Hall, Room 118, and Zoom

Present: Emily Asher, Ken Ashlock, Hannah Durbin, Duane Dycus, Gerry Harris, Abby Hensley, Orville Herndon, Dayna Hutchinson, BJ Johnson, Kelsey Johnson, Bobby Koehler, Trish Lofton, Carlos Lopez, Jeremy McKeel, Audrey Neal, Tressa Ross, Amy Sanders, David Shelton, Mary Steely, Rachel Stewart, Kristen Swisher, Justin Thomas, Karami Underwood, Brian Williams, Lisa Willis, Casey Workman

Absent: Dedrick Brooks, David Looney, Kim Newbern

Guests: Marcie Clark, Assistant Director of Benefits, Human Resources; Dr. Renee Fister, Associate Provost; Dr. Ron K. Patterson, University President; Camela Ramey; Dr. Don Robertson, Vice President of Student Affairs; Haley Stedelin, Associate Director, Human Resources; Dr. David Wilson, Staff Regent

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

REPORTS FROM SPECIAL GUESTS PRESENT:
Dr. Renee Fister, Associate Provost: Dr. Renee Fister said the university is going to participate in the *Great Colleges to Work for* survey which ranks employers based on employee responses to the survey. The organization that sends the questionnaire randomly chooses which employees receive an email with the survey. The emails will be sent in the spring. Dr. Fister encouraged staff to complete the survey if they receive it. Responses are anonymous. The response data will be sent to Dr. Patterson. Dr. Fister thanked staff for all they do.

Dr. Ron K. Patterson, University President: Dr. Patterson said he will have planning conversations today with David Looney, Executive Director for Auxiliary Services, and Jason Youngblood, Assistant Vice President of Facilities Management, regarding potential impacts of winter weather forecasted for the area.

Dr. Laura Foltz will be introduced at the January 23 Board of Regents meeting. The Board of Regents will vote on officially approving Dr. Foltz's appointment to the position of Murray State Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services. Dr. Foltz's first day of work at Murray State will be January 26. She will meet her colleagues and direct reports. Dr. Patterson asked staff to send Dr. Foltz a welcome email.

Dr. Patterson explained the timeline for the Provost search. He provided a summary of the first weeks of the Kentucky Legislative Session. Dr. Patterson gave an update on the status of a veterinary school at Murray State.

The job description for the Associate Vice President for Public Affairs is being revised. The position opening will be posted.

Dr. Patterson said the conversation regarding budget development for fiscal year 2027 has been collaborative, with information being shared and questions answered. He thanked Staff Congress for asking staff for their input on the budget town hall. Staff will have the opportunity to ask questions about the budget.

Dr. Patterson said he would like to have a campus community-wide conversation about fee structure and form a working group to evaluate the fee structure annually. Shared governance groups will be asked for representatives to serve in the working group.

The Presidential Task Force on Policy and Procedure began meeting this week. After the group completes its work, an annual review of policies and procedures will be implemented.

Dr. Patterson has met with Jason Youngblood, Assistant Vice President of Facilities Management, and Shawn Touney, Executive Director of Marketing and Communication, to discuss using uniform signage in buildings and across campus. The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences will assist with mapping.

Dr. Don Robertson, Vice President of Student Affairs: Dr. Don Robertson provided an enrollment update for the spring and fall 2026 semesters and a registration update for Racer Nation Orientation. Murray State recruiters are visiting schools to meet and register students for orientation.

Dr. Robertson asked staff to remind students that scholarship applications are due February 2. Over 200 students are scheduled to attend Honors Day on January 31. The students will be interviewed for Presidential Fellowships.

Jane Hall, former Murray State Faculty Member, Residential College Head, and Academic Advisor in the College of Business, passed away last week.

Haley Stedelin, Associate Director, Human Resources: Haley Stedelin said the Presidential Task Force on Policy and Procedure held its first meeting. Staff Congress member Trish Lofton is on the committee. The search for a Provost has resumed. Communication will be sent to campus when the candidates are scheduled to visit campus. Town hall meetings and opportunities for the candidates to speak with campus groups will be scheduled. Communication will be sent to employees and students if upcoming weather impacts the university schedule. Weather procedures resources are available on the knowledge base. Employees may contact Human Resources and Payroll with questions.

Marcie Clark, Assistant Director of Benefits, Human Resources: Marcie Clark said that Wellness Pledge participants can use the Sonic Boom wellness platform to enter activities they complete for the Wellness Pledge. A Lunch and Learn is scheduled for February 4, at noon, to discuss Sonic Boom in more detail. Ms. Clark explained the services available to employees through the pharmacy coalition Know Your Rx. She listed the services provided by Wayne Corp Employee Assistant Program that are available at no cost for the employee and everyone in the employee's household.

Staff Regent Report: Staff Regent Dr. David Wilson asked staff to remind their constituents that the Staff Survey is open for responses until February 6. He will send a reminder about the Survey. The Board of Regents will meet on January 23, at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will be live-streamed. Dr. Wilson will send a summary of the meeting to staff. He said he hoped everyone had a good break.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Abby Hensley made a motion to approve the December 17, 2025 Meeting Minutes. Dayna Hutchinson seconded. President Neal asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, she called for vote. The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT: The December 2025 Treasurer's Report was not available. It will be presented for approval at a future Staff Congress meeting.

President Neal said the coffee and hot chocolate for the coffee break for staff on January 7, were donated by someone who wants to remain anonymous. She said a thank you note was sent to that person. Staff Congress has received positive comments from staff concerning the coffee and hot chocolate event. Staff Congress is discussing a similar event for staff at extended campuses, as well as similar future events for staff.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:
Executive Committee: President Neal reported that at its January meeting, the Executive Committee discussed the resolutions that will be presented later in today's Staff Congress meeting.

Credentials and Elections Committee: Orville Herndon made a motion to appoint Amy Sanders to complete the remainder of Jodi Hanneman's term on Staff Congress. Trish Lofton seconded. President Neal asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, she called for the question. The motion carried.

Mr. Herndon said that the list of write-ins from the April 2025 Staff Congress Election has been exhausted. The remaining vacancy on Staff Congress will remain until the April 2026 Staff Congress Election.

On behalf of the Credentials and Elections Committee, Mr. Herndon made a motion that the filing period for the April 2026 Staff Congress Election be held March 23 through April 6, and the Staff Congress Election be held April 21 and 22, 2026. As required by the Staff Congress Bylaws, a two-week break is scheduled between the filing period and the election to allow for verification of candidate eligibility to run in the election.

President Neal asked if a timeline has been established for the mailing of postcards with election dates.

Mr. Herndon said the Credentials and Elections Committee will plan a timeline for the postcards.

Mary Steely seconded the motion for the 2026 Staff Congress Election and filing period dates. President Neal asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, she called for the vote. The motion carried.

Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee: On behalf of Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee Chair Kim Newbern, who was unable to attend today's Staff Congress meeting, President Neal said the committee has no report. President Neal relayed Ms. Newbern's appreciation for the donations, thoughts, and prayers.

Communications Committee: No report.

Working Conditions Committee: No report.

Staff Survey Committee: President Neal presented the Staff Survey Committee report on behalf of Committee Chair Dedrick Brooks who was unable to attend today's Staff Congress meeting. The Staff Survey was sent to staff by Staff Regent Dr. David Wilson. President Neal will ask Dr. Wilson to email a reminder to staff to complete the survey. President Neal sent an email to Staff Congress regarding the survey to forward to their constituents. She asked Staff Congress members to encourage staff to complete the survey. The responses to the Staff Survey guide the work of Staff Congress.

Textbook Scholarship Committee: Karami Underwood said that applications for the textbook scholarship and the professional development fund scholarship are due February 1. Information about the scholarships and the application deadline was published in Racer Nation. Ms. Underwood will send the scholarship application information and due date to Staff Congress to forward to their constituents.

President Neal added that the previous scholarship information email sent to staff resulted in donations to the scholarships.

Ms. Underwood said scholarship donations in any amount are welcomed.

Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee: Trish Lofton said that, as Dr. Patterson reported, the Presidential Task Force on Policy and Procedure met to discuss the work and direction of the task force. The members of the group have received an email listing the policies to review first. A repository of policies will be developed.

Ms. Lofton reported that the Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee drafted a resolution requesting tuition waivers be available for use on the first day of employment. The current policy requires a six-month waiting period after employment begins before waivers can be used. The resolution was emailed to Staff Congress members before today's meeting.

President Neal explained that Staff Congress is unable to make policy change but can advocate for the Board of Regents to make the change. The Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee is considering other changes to propose for tuition waivers that will take time to research and discuss.

Discussion followed regarding tuition waivers. Staff have submitted comments concerning tuition waivers to the Staff Survey and to the University-wide Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee. During the discussion, Staff Congress members agreed to remove the final "whereas" in the resolution.

President Neal asked for a motion to approve the *Staff Congress Resolution in Support of Tuition Waiver Policy Revision* as amended.

Trish Lofton made a motion to approve the *Staff Congress Resolution in Support of Tuition Waiver Policy Revision* as amended. Duane Dycus seconded. President Neal asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none, she called for the vote. The motion carried.

President Neal will make the revision to the resolution. The amended resolution will be forwarded to Staff Congress and to University President Dr. Ron Patterson.

Community Involvement and Access Committee: Kristen Swisher reported that the Community Involvement and Access Committee is finalizing the schedule for the Staff Success Week to be held in May. The committee tentatively plans to have the schedule finalized by the next Staff Congress meeting.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITTEES:
Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee: Orville Herndon said the Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee will meet on February 20. The university's health insurance consultant, Marsh McLennan Agency, presented information at the committee's January 16 meeting. The recording of the meeting is available. Questions may be sent to Mr. Herndon.

Dr. Patterson said that when he is in Frankfort and unable to attend the Insurance and Benefits Committee meetings, he watches the meeting recordings. He noted that raises have been consumed by increases in insurance costs. The goal is to try not to take away cost-of-living-increases with insurance cost increases.

Kristen Swisher added that for one of the sessions during the upcoming Staff Success Week, Human Resources staff will discuss underutilized benefits.

Dr. Patterson asked that staff complete open enrollment as soon as possible to help with budget planning.

In the discussion that followed, staff discussed the possibility of scheduling a computer lab for employees to use during open enrollment with assistance from Human Resources staff to answer questions.

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: President Neal reported that the Budget Advisory Committee received a breakdown of revenue and expense categories, and the percentages of income that are applied to which expenses. She thanked Staff Congress members for sending the email to staff requesting feedback concerning staff preferences for the budget town hall. The feedback has been forwarded to Dr. Patterson.

Staff Congress members thanked Dr. Patterson for asking for staff input regarding the town hall.

Shared Governance Committee: No report.

Parking Advisory Committee: No report.

Affirmative Action Committee: No report.

AD HOC COMMITTEES:
Staff Regent Bylaws Revision Committee: No report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: No report.

NEW BUSINESS:
Approval of Revised 2025-2026 Committee List: President Neal said she will make a revision to the revised 2025-2026 Committee List that was emailed to Staff Congress members prior to today's meeting. She will add newly appointed Staff Congress member Amy Sanders to the Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee and to the Community Involvement and Access Committee.

Trish Lofton made a motion to approve the revised 2025-2026 Committee List as amended. Abby Hensley seconded. President Neal asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, she called for the question. The motion carried.

Approval of Years of Service Resolution: President Neal gave an overview of the Staff Congress Resolution *Recognition of Cumulative Years of Service* that was emailed to Staff Congress members before today's Staff Congress meeting. She said that through shared governance, Dr. Patterson asked that such a resolution be drafted. Staff have also contacted Ms. Neal asking for the changes requested in the resolution. If approved by the Board of Regents, the changes requested in the resolution would apply retroactively to employees.

Tressa Ross made a motion to approve the Staff Congress Resolution *Recognition of Cumulative Years of Service*. Orville Herndon seconded. President Neal asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, she called for vote. The motion carried.

INFORMATION ITEMS:
Racer Spirit Award certificates will be distributed after the meeting adjourns.

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

Racer Award certificates were given to Staff Congress members to present to the award nominees.