

UNIVERSITY STAFF SENATE REGULAR MEETING
Mississippi/Illinois Room, Morris University Center
Zoom Meeting ID 945 0315 5890
February 6, 2025 – 8:30am
Approved Minutes

The regular meeting of the University Staff Senate was called to order at 8:33 am on Thursday, February 6, 2025, by Past President Kelly Jo Hendricks.

Present: Kelly Jo Hendricks (Past President), Steven Green (President-Elect), Angie White (Secretary), Ben Kaminski (CSNP Constituency Rep), Evan Lowis (ASR Constituency Rep), Julie Babington, Maria Ferrari, Cheryl Jordan, Shane Kessinger, Sarah Kirkpatrick, Amy Miller, Tiana Montgomery, Dusty Rhodes, Brittany Smith, Tim Staples, Michael Tadlock-Jackson (ex officio), Jessica Take

Absent: Doug James (President), Cindy Cobetto (Treasurer), Christy McDougal (CSOR Constituency Rep), Linda Eilerman, Mike Hamil

Guests: Gregory Bartholomew, Keith Becherer, Michelle Black, Amy Bodensstab, Leslie Boudouris, Karyn Chambers, Octavia Cross, Katie Eilers, Xanthe Emerick, Rachel Garrett, Patricia Hansen, Barbara Kane, Heather Knapp, Matthew Miller, Jessica McCawley, Patricia Merritt, Misty Newman, Robert Newman, Michelle Nickerson, Lynn Noe, Thomas Rosner, Teresa Shipton, Jill Smucker, Brandon Stookey, Connie Wyvell

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Meeting minutes from January 9, 2025 were approved as written.

GUEST SPEAKER:

Collin Van Meter from SURS was supposed to be this month's guest speaker; however, he had to cancel due to a family emergency. Collin did provide written responses to questions submitted in advance and promised to reschedule his visit with Staff Senate. The written responses spoke to the following:

- The (SURS) board increased the fiscal year 2026 effective rate of interest to 7.25% from 7.0%. The SURS effective rate of interest is used for the calculation of service credit purchases, refunds of survivor and excess contributions, Traditional and Portable defined benefit plan refunds, and lump-sum Portable plan retirements. What does this typically mean for current employees? Is it advantageous or not in most situations, etc.?
- On July 2, 2025, the Money Purchase Factors used to calculate SURS retirement benefits are changing. Members retiring on or after that date, with the highest retirement calculation under the Money Purchase calculation could be affected. Who should be paying attention to this, i.e. anyone eligible to retire, within 1-2 years of retirement, etc.?
- Actuarial formulas are typically reviewed every 3 years correct by SURS? Can you explain the rationale and potential impact in 2028, 2031, etc.?
- SUAA works as an advocacy organization to lobby state legislatures for employee benefits, etc. What if any active lobbying efforts can SURS take on for Tier II individuals? Can you talk about how SUAA works with SURS or not?
- Are there any current or upcoming efforts to align Tier 2 Pensions closer to Tier 1 parameters and benefit levels?
- With President Biden signing the Social Security Fairness Act into law on January 6th, does SURS anticipate (or already seen) an influx of current employees who are putting in retirement

paperwork since their benefits may no longer be diminished? Any other impact being seen a few weeks after being signed?

- Regarding SURS Health Insurance – is there a fee for spouses?

REPORTS:

Past President Kelly Jo Hendricks – Filling in during Doug’s absence. Worked with Keith Becherer on a draft memo requesting a fair representation of vacation/sick days between staff categories. Spent the latter part of the month helping with tasks ordinarily handled by Doug.

President-Elect Steven Green – Will be sending out an announcement soon regarding the Staff Senate election. There will be a decent number of current senator spots open for election this cycle.

There were no other executive reports.

Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration: No update.

Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management: Finished on campus interviews. Hoping to have someone named by the next meeting.

Associate Provost & Dean of the Graduate School: Christopher Slaten selected as the next Dean of the Graduate School, start date TBD.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Alton/Non-Rep Senator Vacancy – Angela Pritchett presented why she would like to serve on Staff Senate. Staff Senate members approved Angela’s application to serve as a member of Staff Senate.

NEW BUSINESS:

None. There was a question from Shane Kessinger after Unfinished Business, but it has been added to the “Public Comment” section of the minutes for consistency.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Public Relations – Will meet next week.

Scholarship – No update.

Fundraising – Only has two members on the committee. Steven will look at the newly elected members of Staff Senate and allocate them on the internal committees.

Diversity Initiatives – Met on January 29; the meeting was positive and informative. If you are interested in Title IX training or being an equity advisor, please contact Mary Zabriskie from the EOA/Title IX Office.

Policy Review – Carl hasn’t gotten back with firm dates for the February and April meetings. Amy Bodensstab mentioned that HR is in the process of drafting an Accrued Employee Leave Donation Policy, and it was sent to the union representatives for review. Ben will send it to Staff Senate members via Teams, and if any non-Staff Senate members would like to see the draft, please reach out to Amy.

Staff Wellness – There are Drug Take Back flyers advertising dates on all three campuses: Edwardsville – 2/25; Alton – 2/26; East St. Louis – 2/27. Bring your unused, expired, and unwanted medications to be properly disposed of and meet one of your Staff Senators.

Elections & Operations – As mentioned above, an announcement will go out on The E Today soon.

ACTION ITEMS:

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Governor's Budget Address – Wednesday, Feb. 19th at Noon
- b. Leadership Training: February 24-27. More registration opportunities will be emailed to staff.
- c. SIUE PD/USS Drug Take Back events – Maria
 - i. Tuesday, February 25th – Lower Level – MUC
 - ii. Tuesday, April 22nd – Lower Level – MUC
 - iii. ESTL Campus – Thursday, February 27 & Thursday, April 24 – LRC in Building B
 - iv. Alton Campus – Wednesday, February 26 & Wednesday, April 23 – Lobby of Bldg 273
- d. Upcoming Guest Speakers at Staff Senate
 - i. March – Mark Dochterman (ESL Programs)
- e. March USS Meeting – ESL Campus

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- a. USS Memo for HR regarding Vacation Accrual Amounts

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Shane Kessinger asked if there is a plan to have a full-time Office Support staff for University Governance, as Anne Hunter used to be. Currently Michael Tadlock-Jackson from the Provost's Office is covering these duties. Kelly Jo pointed out that due to the recent re-organization of this position from the Chancellor's Office to the Provost's Office, Michael will have more time to dedicate to University Governance. If you have specific requests you need help within Staff Senate, feel free to reach out to Michael directly.

Amy Bodenstab and Shane Kessinger brought up that there are more full-time workers in Facilities Management. Amy mentioned that the union is researching the civil service laws, which are vaguely written to the administration's favor.

Amy Bodenstab thanked Staff Senate for all the work we do.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 am.

Submitted by Michael Tadlock Jackson, University Governance