

North Carolina A & T State University
Staff Senate
Full Body Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 24, 2009@ 2:00 pm in Merrick Hall Auditorium

Present: Regina Ballard, Andrea Brooks, Barbara Carpenter, Stephanie Crisp, Sarah Faulkner, Kristen Freeman, Hap Giberson, James Griffin, Michael Hatcher, Donna Holland, Elreta Isley, Laketta Lee, Madelyn McClinton, Albertina McGirt, Sharon Mitchell, Stephanie Morrison, Susie Moore, Maria Palmer, William Parker, Jorenda Pena-Lennon, Gertrude Pennix, Daphne Roach, Gaylene Rogers, Willene Rucker, Shirley Samuel, Gwendolyn Sanders, Arthur Stewart, Gail Torres, Linda Waddell, Katherine Wilkerson, Anita Wright

Absent: Amy Bell, Diane Brown, Martina Chavis, April Cobb, Sophia Davis, Jennifer Ervin, Debora Ferguson, Nicole Fontaine, James Foreman, Patricia Hughes, Kristie Johnson, Trevor Taylor

OPENING

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sharon Mitchell, she welcomed guests, followed by a moment of silence.

Vice Chair Albertina McGirt introduced the Keynote Speaker, Chancellor Martin then invited the Senators to introduce themselves to Chancellor Martin and VC McAbee as well as to provide the number of constituents they represent.

Chancellor Martin opened with a thank you to former Chair Hap Giberson for his service on the Staff Senate and his representation of the University. Chancellor Martin was vary candid in his remarks stating that there will be open lines of communication between his office and the staff and that it is important for his office to understand the concerns of the faculty and staff. Furthermore, issues on campus will be more transparent with matters relating to searches, budget, etc will go before both the Staff Senate and Faculty Senate before going to the Board of Trustees. No policies will be poorly developed and rushed through.

Where we are: The Chancellor feels that there is extensive opportunity and potential for A&T and feels that we are competing successfully with our peers. Potential is untapped for the most part. There is extensive discussion with business & community leaders and they want A&T to be a major player in the Triad. With extensive job loss in the Triad in the past year, the triad needs UNCG, GTCC, & A&T to help with training & help create new technologies that can create new companies & jobs. There were 3 new companies developed from research that has occurred at A&T in the last 3years.

Updates: We are experiencing enrollment growth for the first time in 5 years: about 2%. Freshmen 17%, transfer students 37%, graduate students 18-20% increase. Approximately 300 out of state students did not return to A&T due to our economy. Interactions with students indicate that they want to return but financially cannot.

2005-2008 – Enrollment increased in all UNC universities EXCEPT for NC A&T and NC Central. A&T raised admission standards in 2007. Decisions were made in 2002 & 2003 to expand admissions to receive the enrollment growth funding without regard to quality of students. Retention rates dropped due to lack of an enhanced remedial student support services program and lowered student quality resulted in students staying for a maximum of 2 years; retention rates dropped. Our retention rates are among the poorest in the UNC system and our image and reputation diminished. Therefore, we must make major repairs and engage the entire campus. This means treating everyone with civility and respect – especially students and parents.

Budget Reductions: Last fiscal year the state's projected revenue was 40% short of its target for 2009-10. All universities had to stop spending and set aside a portion of its budget; for A&T that amounted to 7%, about \$7

million. Bowles issued a mandate to every university to decrease the budget by 12% for this year & 16% for next year. However, A&T has been approved for 10% for the next 2 years. To make these cuts with the minimum impact to the students, most cuts were taken from administrative lines. There were 71.25 positions cut and 6 of those were filled positions. Riffed employees were met personally and assisted with further training and/or job placement. Four employees retired and two are in other positions on campus. Eighty percent of our annual budget is expended for personnel.

The University is to cut 10% of our budget for the next school year. Erskine Bowles' top priorities are to streamline efficiency on campuses, reduce personnel and supply costs, improve academics, and increase accountability. PACE (President's Advisory Council on Efficiency) was designed to force every university to analyze all costs and to cut costs wherever possible. The goal was to keep tuition as low as practicable. However, at many universities administrative costs actually increased because the Universities were not accountable to Bowles for new positions. Therefore, President Bowles mandated that all universities had to resubmit their 10% reduction plans.

Collaborations at UNCG – We have two collaborations with UNCG. The community expects the two universities to be strategic to the needs of the area. Core areas (cluster areas) of national focus are nanoscience, transportation, biotechnology, fuel energy and these areas align very well with the core focuses of our university.

Research Park: We gave up 75 acres of the Farm. There is currently 1 building – USDA and we hope to add at least one every couple of years. We still have 125 acres, but the University is actively looking to acquire new tracts of farm land.

School of Nanoscience: Approved by Board of Governors as the Joint School of Nanoscience with UNCG. It was funded with \$4 million of state appropriations. The new Dean is Jim Ryan and he is developing a Ph.D. and Masters program in nanoscience. The first class will start in the Fall 2010. The Masters Program will go before the Board of Governors at the October meeting and the Ph.D. program for the January Board of Governors meeting. It will cost \$60 million to build the new building and we break ground in Research Park 11/9/09.

Where we are heading - We are a Research Intensive Doctoral institution and the 4 universities are – UNCC, ECU, UNCG and A&T. There are comparisons that are made daily about the 4 institutions. A&T is at the bottom of the group because we have not done anything to make us competitive with the others. The other 3 institutions have no Masters categories on their lists. We need to improve our performance against benchmarks and our peers as this makes a difference in funding. Funding will become attached to performance rather than enrollment growth. Aggie Pride needs to mean something. We need to be more competitive and relevant while continuing to be an HBCU.

VC McAbee suggested explaining their perception of their own universities. The questions were weighted and the points were totaled for ranking. A&T ranked 25 among HBCUs in America. We are low due to first survey that A&T did not send in the data to the survey. Previous leadership decided not to participate in the surveys. NC Central is ranked number 1 amongst public universities and 10 amongst all HBCUs.

Question Asked: We are trying to set a new direction at A&T and so far there have been no changes in middle management. There are places on campus that she does not feel welcome. There is no training for directors at middle levels. **Response:** We did not get this way overnight. We must begin shaping colleagues and the Board of Trustees. We need a strong leadership team. This has been discussed extensively with the leadership team. This is a broken area on campus with limited training and limited accountability. We need more training. Chancellor Martin has had many closed door meetings with the leadership. His advice is to make a commitment to yourself to try to be better at what you do. We must have policies and expectations well defined and in place. If someone is behaving inappropriately, there must be consequences – be on time, pleasant, work effectively.

Question Asked: Has it been looked at the number of people that are close to retirement and approaching them about early retirement? **Response:** This has been looked at but you must be cautious that you are not “forcing” them out. Keep in mind that with the poor economy some can’t afford to retire. VC McAbee stated that since we are not private, we can not change our retirement plans at the University level. These would have to be changed at the State level. Chancellor Martin stated that the UNC system may push for changes to be made so that incentives could be offered to those that would elect to take early retirement.

Question Asked: There was a memo to your managers regarding accountability in the absence of upper management; the 2nd in command must know what to do and/or who to go at the next level relative to continued operations. Does this apply to the entire university? **Response:** When I arrived as Chancellor, if I sent a memo to a cabinet member in the morning, I might get a response late in the day or even the next day. If I called the office, I might get a call back the next day. It has been made very clear if upper management is out of the office, the 2nd in command better know where you are, how you can be contacted, and who has the authority to make decisions in their absence. There is now a written set of protocols and this should apply in all departments, all over campus.

Question Asked: Sometimes in departments, key people within the department do not know who is where when. **Response:** This will be on the next meeting agenda.

Question Asked: There is a huge difference in the campus from the time that I entered the campus as a freshman to now. How do you feel about an article in *Register* about students “reclaiming” the campus? In the article it states that the VC of Technology makes over \$175,000 per year. What is the University getting from the Division of Information Technology and how do you feel about this article? **Response:** I have formed an opinion about every cabinet member but it is inappropriate for me to make comments about that. Am I happy with the way we are integrating technology into the campus and classroom? “No.”

Question Asked: Regarding checks and balances within a culture of workplace bullying; intimidation is often done to cover up wrong doings at upper levels and it is very prevalent on our campus. As a staff member, many have no place to go with grievances. Many times the misbehavior does not come out until an audit. **Chancellor Martin:** Why not go to the supervisor? **Response:** Often this is where the problem is beginning. **Chancellor Martin:** If there is a serious infraction happening on the campus, send the problem directly to the Chancellor. No one else reads his email. You can call the hotline. We won’t improve unless we provide an opportunity for people to share their concerns.

Question Asked: Look at the transfer rate and retention rate of staff and faculty prior to your coming. Many are afraid to report for fear of reprisal. **VC McAbee** encouraged the senators to use the chain of command. This is part of accountability. If the problem is with the supervisor, go to their supervisor, and so on. There are two key developmental initiatives: 1) Customer service –Fundamental skills and understanding how your job and attitude affects others. 2) Mandatory supervisory management training which will occur within this academic year.

Question Asked: To VC McAbee: There has never been an approachable protocol in Human Resources. When information has been given to Human Resources it was never been felt that Human Resources was a user friendly environment for SPA/EPA non-teaching employees. Human Resources have historically never been helpful to SPA/EPA non-teaching employees. It has been offensive that we do not have a fair grievance process. Since we have faith in our Chancellor it increases our faith in HR and the University. **VC McAbee:** she is aware of these problems. Progress is slow and it will not be changed overnight. There is accountability in place now. Go to her personally and immediately if we encounter Human Resources problems.

Senator Statement: I have been here for 4 years & I was seeking companionship with my co-workers. As a highly motivated person, I decided that one thing that I can do to break down the “walls” was to sing. It will sometimes brighten one person’s day. We need to find a common ground and find a way to help others. If you develop negativity then it spreads to others.

Chair Mitchell introduced VC McAbee.

BANNER HR/Payroll transition: See handout. UNC Finance Improvement and Transformation Project (FIT). Key leaders on campus: VC McAbee, VJ Verma, Robert Pompey, Maurice Warren, Michael Jackson
10/1/09 – Go live UNC Pembroke (pilot campus)
1/2010 – UNC Asheville & Western Carolina – go live
4/2010 – A&T, Fayetteville state, NC School of the Arts – go live

At this point we are on track.

We will be using a Shared Services Model – run out of Chapel Hill at General Administration – some things are done at General Administration & some on campus.

For A&T: an external consultant (Sunguard) was brought in to do an assessment to make sure that we are on track & to troubleshoot possible problems.

10/1/09: FIT team from General Administration to come to campus to do precertification of the data. 10/28/09 FIT team comes back for final certification. There will be a Banner upgrade but minimal changes in terms of what we see. This will be during fall break. Kronos system interfaces with Banner for time sheets to be completed in December. As of April 2010 students & temporary employees will be paid bi-weekly.

Aggie Connect: Becomes Intranet for the university. This gives everyone a common platform for all employees to use. This is the employee self-service portal and this will give us the ability to do timecards on line. All leave request will be done online. This means greater efficiency. This will be for ALL employees. There will have to be a contingency plan in place (central payroll) if someone doesn’t get paid.

Question Asked: Students and temporary employees will be paid biweekly. Has there been any thought for monthly payroll to get paid biweekly? **VC McAbee:** It was discussed with the FIT team. That transition would be too much to manage for the entire staff by April so we need more time to plan for it, however this may happen in the future.

Question Asked: When we pay the students, they get very upset if they don’t get paid. Will the students be pre-warned that they will be receiving a bi-weekly rather than a monthly paycheck? **VC McAbee:** Yes.

Question Asked: Electronic submission of timesheets. Will the intranet notify the employee when the supervisor has signed off on the sheet & it has been submitted to Human Resources. **VC McAbee:** Yes

Question Asked: Will there be a team that is overseeing this project? Will there be a pilot team to try it first? **Maurice Warren:** There will be a departmental coordinator to make sure that it works properly.

Question Asked: Who will be doing the training? **VC McAbee:** Rob Cramer is the coordinator. Then it will be decided who will be the facilitator. **Question Asked:** since Aggie Connect is a DoIT project, then who will do the training? **VC McAbee:** not decided yet

There was a question asked if we are allowed more than 24 hours of Community Service time each year and VC McAbee responded that 24 hours is the maximum allowed.

Question Asked: Often times the training is not adequate even when the questions were written down & given to Human Resources, we still don’t get adequate training. We need to know that we can get additional training as needed. Will there be a helpline that we can call? **VC McAbee:** I will suggest smaller sessions, manager tool kits and a help line.

Question Asked: In most situations the supervisors have someone else within the area that oversees the items. Will the payroll coordinator, have the same training as the supervisor? **VC McAbee:** yes

Question Asked: Will the time accountability be automatic (i.e., when you turn on your computer)? **Maurice Warren:** No, you will have to manually enter your time.

Question Asked: Where are we with overtime & pay raises given budget reductions? **VC McAbee:** There were no increases this year. We don't know what will happen in July. We are in a wage freeze. With overtime there is not a university mandate, but it should be held in check by the supervisors in the areas based on their budgets.

Question Asked: If there is a change in a job description that mandates a change in pay what happens? **VC McAbee:** It is based upon the budgets in respective areas and will depend upon how funding is (state funded not happening). There will not be salary increases this fiscal year.

Question Asked: Grievances: Because of the type of office where I work, I get phone calls from workers from across the campus. We (the University) have hired and lost many employees in the past year. I advised the individuals to document, go to your supervisor, go above supervisor, etc. There have been reprimands for this but what can we do to help employees that come to us for advice? **VC McAbee:** Don't take on responsibilities that are not yours. Tell them to contact Human Resources; it is ok to contact VC McAbee or Link Butler. They need to be specific about what their need is and they will be contacted immediately.

Statement – A lack of trust towards HR new hires has been communicated by employees who do not feel comfortable interacting with them. The make-up of new hires appears one sided for major HR leadership positions given the talent pool available due to national layoffs and unemployed outstanding graduates. **VC McAbee:** There needs to be more diversity on campus in all departments. **Statement:** Respecting individual employee perceptions, some are not comfortable. McGirt favors diversity so race and gender aren't exclusive: address lack of sensitivity, lack of access to personnel who fail to understand the mission of an HBCU and the HR office makeup that's so different from competitive universities. **VC McAbee:** We hire based upon performance and skills, but try to include diversity. Staff Senators need to help reassure our staff.

Statement: I worked with Linc previously. He is very sensitive with everyone. It is very different here at A&T than at our previous employer. There is finally someone in HR that will respond to me in a timely manner. I have referred many people to him and they have been happy with their results.

Statement: Instead of us battling each other, we need to take the Chancellor's advice and try to work together. Our Chancellor knows our problems & we need work together knowing that we can make a difference. Let's let the past be in the past and move forward with a new attitude.

Question Asked: There was a day taken away from the Christmas holiday. Are there any alternatives for those that can't afford to take that day as a holiday? **VC McAbee:** This day was not originally an holiday, however, you can use your furlough time to cover that day.

Due to time constraints there was no vision communicated from the new chair and no committee or officer reports.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:35 pm.

Recorded by Senator Katherine Wilkerson