GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
STAFF COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2013
Capitol Suite, Student Center


Excused: Courtney DuBois, MaryAnn Gaunt, Lyshandra Holmes, Amanda Stoll, Susan Vogtner, Anita Webb

Absent: Deshod Amos, Colleen Blanchard, John Brittian, Robert Crowder, Leslie Currah, La Tanya Frierson, Casey Heath, Bryan Murray, Ladonna Pelt, Ednisha Riley, Lisa Shepard, Corrin Sorteberg, Aileen Taylor, Chad Van Gordon, Alicia White, Rhonda Williams, Gary Wilson, Valerie Woods, Lisa Zanders

Guests: Sonda Abernathy, Julie Kerlin, Tom Lewis

Opening Business
Chair Jowanna Tillman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Minutes
Minutes from the January 16, 2013, meeting were approved.

Program
Tom Lewis and Julie Kerlin from Government and Community Affairs reported on the 2013 legislative session. There are more than 40 new legislators this year; many current legislators are GSU grads including the Pres Pro Tem and the majority leader of the Senate. J. Kerlin reported on the funding formula and noted the largest construction item on the list is the College of Law. She added that we may break ground on the law school in the fall.

J. Kerlin also explained that any legislation brought forth this year can carry over to next year as the session has a biennial agenda. She noted that cross over day is March 6, which is the 29th day of session, and any bills that don't make it through from one side of the capitol to the other will not be passed that session. She noted that the state legislature’s only constitutional requirement is to pass the state budget. The preliminary budget has gone through appropriations, and the House. Total formula funding budget is $91 million in additional funding (we received $181 million for the first half of the year).
J. Kerlin reported that the top Board of Regents’ issue this year is gun laws; (25 pieces of legislation to date) particularly a bill to carry guns on public school and university campuses with concealed permit (House Bill 29). BOR is concerned about the removal of the school safety zone. The zone restricts people from bringing guns on campus EXCEPT locked in their cars in the parking lot. The new House Bill 29 would open gun carrying to dormitories, sports facilities, classrooms, etc. However, the PSC would be an exception due to the Homeland Security requirements. J. Kerlin reported that the University System is in talks with legislative and state leadership to keep the leadership to their word to keep college campuses out of the legislation.

Additional topics of interest include the proposal to lower HOPE requirements for technical schools not university system schools, from the currently required GPA of 3.0 to 2.0. A bill has been proposed to carry over university system funds from year to year and not return the money to the state at end of fiscal year. Only 2% of the funds would be available to be carried forward and there are restrictions. J. Kerlin noted that government affairs feels very positive about the chances that this bill will pass.

J. Kerlin reported on other related legislative issues including a proposal to transfer the Georgia Archives to the University System and retirement bills related to ORP (not TRS). She explained that the complete budget is due at the end session in late March and the governor will have 40 days to approve the budget (he has line item veto and can veto any single item in the budget.)

J. Tillman asked about the possibility of raises, stating that there is no fund for top staff retention as there is for top faculty. J. Kerlin says that the chancellor keeps putting this idea forward but isn't getting anywhere. She added it was more likely to happen right before the statewide elections. T. Lewis says to watch the revenue collections (came in at 10% last month) as they have been in a positive mode but there is very little possibility of raises this year. University presidents and the chancellor have been very vocal about how they are losing key employees to this lack of raises.

J. Kerlin encouraged all staff council members to communicate with their reps and let them know your concerns as a citizen. A. Amari asked about lobby training. T. Lewis replied that the new ethics bill will impact this training as in the future advocates will need to be registered as lobbyists.

S. Abernathy asked how we can help to prevent the passage of the gun bills. J. Kerlin says that we as individuals can and should contact our own representatives, identify yourself as constituents but also as GSU employee and include the disclaimer that you are not speaking for the university. Email today, phone call tomorrow can be effective. J. Kerlin also noted that she is always available and could accommodate us at the Capitol if we wish, at least until the ethics bill passes.

J. Tillman reminded us to sign up for the weekly government affairs department newsletter.

K. Chappell and M. Stone conducted senate elections --five candidates for four slots. K. Chappell reminded all that only current staff council members eligible to vote.
Committee reports
J. Tillman called for committee reports and reminded committees to send in their annual reports. Hearing none, J. Tillman called for other business.

Other business
J. Tillman gave end of year remarks, noting that officer elections will occur next month and that all offices open except for planning director, as that is filled by the outgoing chair. She noted that new representatives will start in March. J. Tillman reported that President Becker will meet quarterly with staff council chair and that the chair will have to present to administrative council annually. This is a new duty that is not already in bylaws.

J. Medlock recommended that staff council explore ways we can petition our legislators as staff particularly around the issue of retention of staff -- do we really know if staff members are leaving because they haven't received raises. He stressed the need to compile this information. J. Tilman stated the problem was that people often self-report incorrectly on why they resigned. Money isn't always the reason and often it's used as the excuse to get away from a supervisor. J. Medlock stated that he wanted to see a group explore the issue of staff turnover. J. Tillman stated that turnover is a lagging indicator not a leading indicator.

D. Caudill noted that it was important to encourage staff participation in the staff survey. H. Granville asked if there was a retention question. J. Medlock answered yes that question was included and asked for an effort to get higher university-wide participation.

K. Chappell announced Senate elections results -- newly elected senators are A. Amari, M. Gaunt, J. Medlock and J. Tillman.

J. Tillman reminded all representatives and senators to mark their calendars for the staff retreat on May 17.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.