



STAFF SENATE MINUTES

September 15, 2021 10:00 am Library Conference Room 622/Zoom

Attendees	<p>Senators: Greg Andrews, Kristal Anzalone, Mallory Benedetto, Benji Buffington, Mystee Burrell, Fernando Cordova, Therese Filhiol-Secretary, Andrew Hardee-Parliamentarian, Joanna Hunter, Robyn Jordan, Meghan Olinger-Vice President/President Elect, Melissa Rhodes-President, Allison Thompson-Past President, Nicole Walker, Jimmy Waller, Sara Webb, Hope Young</p> <p>Visitors: James Beinkemper, Ron Berry, Brandon Bruscato, Kelli Cole, Chance Eppinette, Valerie Fields, Seth Hall, Christie Hemphill, Marla Herrington, Erica Hopko, Jennifer Huey, Jeanie Johnson, Coty Lee, Sabrina McClain, Janelle McDaniel, Dana Mejia, Noelle Prestridge, Jeanette Robinson, Ashley Taylor, Marcia Wells, Jamare Williams</p>
Excused	Meagan Morris
Call to Order	
<p>September 2021 Staff Senate Meeting called to order by President Rhodes Roll taken by Secretary Filhiol Visitors welcomed by President Rhodes</p>	
Approval of Minutes	
<p>Motion was made by Senator Benedetto to approve the Minutes of the August 2021 meeting Seconded by Senator Olinger</p>	
Guest Speaker	
<p>ULM President Ron Berry – Dr. Berry thanked the staff for getting us through the hectic back-to-school period. He reflected on how fast his first year as president went by and then shared many things that have been initiated and accomplished in that time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career pathway for Staff; working with HR Director Melissa Ducote to develop a framework for employees to move up in position and/or pay, and to make it visible so that staff can see what the path is and where they are in reference to it. • The Academic Innovation Center will be ended and recreated as a teaching, learning, and service innovation center, with a director to develop leadership, research, service, and professional development academies for all sectors of employees. They hope to have it ready in the Spring. • Renegotiated debt on the dorms, netting a savings of \$5.5 million by getting the bond rate down to 1.6%, and without adding time to the repayment schedule. That \$5.5 million is available now to take care of many things that have been put off for a long time. • Initiated a process to monetize the Physical Plant. An outside firm will analyze our operations and remarket our excess capacity to create savings over a 15- or 30-year period. The firm will front-fund the savings, which could be as much \$15-20 million. The firm will provide a quarterly report of our environmental impact, which they guarantee will go down over the years. Savings garnered from this process can go into auxiliaries or the Foundation to maintain flexibility of use. • As part of being more creative with budgetary efforts, the deans and other budget heads have been challenged to be entrepreneurial in their thinking so that strategic investments can be made. All of the budget requests were funded and accountability is now tied to all requests. Deans and other heads are being trusted to make risk/benefit assessments themselves. • Enrollment is down by 200 compared to last Fall, which indicates area where we can improve: web presence; electronic outreach, and communication. Through a process of reevaluation of current staffing, positions have been created or redirected to address these critical areas in our recruiting effort. • All the other schools around us are currently represented by lobbyists in Washington, DC and in Baton Rouge, and they end up 	

getting some sizable allocations. We're not allowed to pay for that from university funds, so the Foundation is going to pay. Once we get some money coming our way, we can replace the funds in the Foundation.

- The remaining debt on the Field House, \$1 million that was not covered by private funding, will be retired next week. This will put our athletic programs into growth rather than trying to get out of a hole.
- Hoping to offer bigger raises next year, pending state cooperation.
- COVID relief funds of \$5.4 million in financial aid for students will be released next week, and \$3.6 million will be released in the Spring. There is still about \$15 million remaining to cover expenses for the university.

Dr. Berry's presentation was followed by a Q&A session:

Q: *Tell us what you can about the proposed book program.*

A: As part of the 90th Anniversary and Investiture, Dr. Berry wanted to include a service project that would be meaningful in the community. United Way proposed a third-grader reading project which led to the creation of "There's a Bridge on the Bayou," a book with a message of hopes, dreams, aspirations. Monroe City third graders come to campus for the 90th birthday of the university, have some cake & ice-cream, and have the book read to them. Each student will receive a copy, and each copy represents a \$500 scholarship for those who become freshmen at ULM in 10 years, which will be our centennial anniversary. 2500 third graders will receive the book. Amy Weems is leading the reader volunteer effort and coordinating with Monroe City and Ouachita Parish schools.

Q: *Is there a chance that the Physical Plant project will lead to master facilities plan changes?*

A: No, but there is a need to look at the current plan, and make some changes.

Q: *Are there any other opportunities for refinancing?*

A: Not right now; it was a unique opportunity.

Q: *Are there any constitutional amendments coming up in the November election that effect ULM?*

A: Can't say, but the lobbying firm will let us know.

Q: *How do other schools find foreign exchange students to recruit when ULM doesn't?*

A: The Digital Marketing Specialist for Enrollment will be able to help with marketing efforts. There is a plan in place to enhance recruitment efforts with marketing. Marketing and communications have been separated, and marketing will get more attention.

Q: *Why haven't we ever had lobbyists?*

A: We couldn't afford it and it didn't get prioritized. The lobbying firm we're working with has connections in our region and will bring opportunities to partner and collaborate. For example, we are in partnership with the City of Monroe, Ouachita Parish, the Monroe-West Monroe Chamber of Commerce, and private individuals for a Biomedical Research Innovation Park. Louisiana Economic Dev is writing a grant for us, which is unheard of. One of our partners will be the first tenant in the building. The facility will be named BIOME and will be located next door to Pharmacy.

Q: *How do you manage? How do you stay grounded?*

A: Would like to do more. Family keeps him grounded.

Q: *What's on your reading list?*

A: Lots of things. Non-fiction by day; fiction at the end of the day.

Q: *Getting back to the topic of COVID*

A: Vaccination data will come out this week. Faculty and staff will be asked to upload vaccination status. Mandatory weekly testing of unvaccinated individuals will begin soon. We'll have new software for tracking. We're trying to prevent spread to avoid becoming a hot spot, thus having to go to online operation. Our student vaccination rate is higher than other schools in the State. On another note, we recently purchased the degree audit module for Banner, which will improve the turnaround on graduation checkouts. There won't be any more manual checkouts; it will all be done automatically in Banner.

Reports of Committees

Communications – No report.

Handbook – No report.

Constitution & Bylaws – No report.

Elections – No report.

Welfare – Work is ongoing; further information will be provided in New Business.

Unfinished Business

Update from President Rhodes:

- Plans for Campus Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training are still being worked out. Information will be sent out soon to employees.

New Business

- Janelle McDaniel, Faculty Senate President, served as the ULM employee representative during the presidential search in 2020. Dr. Mcdaniel expressed her appreciation for working with Staff Senate and looks forward to collaborating on issues going forward.
- Brandon Bruscato, Director of Recreational Services, and Seth Hall, Chief Strategy Officer, presented information about a Faculty/Staff /Community Wellness initiative called "Talon Trot Tuesday" to be held on Tuesday, September 28 and hopefully on Tuesdays thereafter. The event will be partnered with Fleet Feet of Monroe. It is not a race; it's a walk, a run, or, whatever the participant can do. Another

initiative in the works is the establishment of loops with signage for people to take walks or runs around campus. Brandon took suggestions about how to keep people on campus after hours so they can participate in the Talon Trot. He said they are working on giveaways, like t-shirts and other gear. One suggestion was to meet at Schultze for dinner afterward. Another suggestion was to have a set meet-up spot to stretch and warm up prior to the event. Music at the gathering place was also suggested to generate some excitement. Making the trail accessible to all participants, including the differently abled.

- President Rhodes proposed the appointment of James Beinkemper to fill the vacancy left by Senator Ginger Ezell, who is leaving the university. The motion to accept the appointment was made by Senator Thompson and seconded by Senator Olinger. The motion passed unanimously. Senator Beinkemper will serve the rest of the term through 2023.
- President Rhodes also announced that the Twin City Marathon needs volunteers.

Adjournment

There being no other business, a motion to adjourn was made by Senator Benedetto and seconded by Senator Andrews.

The next meeting will be October 20, 2021 at 10:00 am in the Library Conference Room 622. Guests may attend via Zoom.