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Meeting 2005-02-17

Civil Service Senate

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Governors State University
Civil Service Senate

Minutes

February 17, 2005

10:30 a.m.

Sherman Music Recital Hall

Civil Service Senate President Kathy Miller opened the meeting at 10:33 a.m.

Present: Susan Bell, Donna Finn, Martha Hellman, Sean Jones, William Kelly, Cindy Matthias, Kathy Miller, Eric Nicholson, Renee Rainey, Pat Rogala, Jana Sheely, Karen Sinwelski, Scott Smith, Karen Stuenkel, Annie Ware, Janice Washington, Stephanie Wenzel

Excused: Blondia Jasper, Cynthia Woodard

Absent: Debra Boyd, Marva Hampton, Mary Hellings, Rhonda Jackson, Audrey McIntyre

Minutes of January 20 Meeting: Moved and seconded to accept, passed

Suspension of Agenda: Moved, seconded, passed

Special Guests: **Addison Woodward**, Retired Faculty
 Jan Schultz, Human Resources

Addison Woodward shared his philosophy, "Live with one foot in the present and one foot in the future," a thought which has great meaning in light of the current situation with the three largest pension funds, SURS, Teachers, and State Employees.

Among the governor's options for handling the pension funding shortfall are reducing COLA increases provided to new employees only and limiting the rate of return on investment of pension funds to 6% for present employees. The governor will probably also look at the cost of retirees' health insurance. The problem facing the pension system is probably due to the State, in the late 1980s and 1990s, not making contributions to match employee contributions; therefore reducing earnings.

The State is obligated to contribute \$2.3 billion this year; however, due to some very creative bookkeeping, they plan to contribute only \$1.7 billion. Right now, current employees pensions look safe, but new employees will be hurt if some of the proposed solutions are adopted. And this is only the 'tip of the iceberg' – there is a \$4 billion obligation coming up soon.

Woodward encouraged us to write to our senators and representatives, both state and federal, to the governor, and to local newspapers. State legislators' addresses can be found at www.gsusuaa.com. And join GSU-SUAA – with 12,000 members, we can make ourselves heard.

Another issue is Social Security offsets; a survivor on a state pension will have a 1-to-1 reduction. For this issue, we need to contact our federal senators, especially Barack Obama, who pledged to eliminate Social Security offsets.

Q: When will the 6% rate of return go into effect?

A: Unsure, but probably July 1; it will not affect current retirees. However, this will also affect the money purchase formula and may 'ripple' into other areas.

Q: For writing letters to representatives, etc., is there any specific language or template on the SUAA site for all topics of concern?

A: Woodward will send copies of his letters to Kathy Miller for posting or distribution to members.

Q: How about mass mailing of form letters?

A: Not necessarily effective, but why not do it anyway. Also phone calls, e-mails. These are bad economic times, and the more noise we, as affected parties, can make, the better.

Gary Lyon, president of the Faculty Senate:

Professor Lyon thanked the Civil Service Senate for providing this opportunity and strongly urged the CSS to follow Addison's advice.

President Miller thanked Addison Woodward and Gary Lyon for joining us today, and urged the members to let our governor and our representatives know that the current proposals are not acceptable. Our rate of return has been 8% to 10% - if it can be cut to 6% this year, what could happen next year?

Kathy also reminded us about the Yahoo newsgroup ill.univ.grp located at www.yahoo.com/groups. Sign into Illinoisuniversityemployees; you can either get e-mail updates or view posting from others.

New Business:

The CSS received a thank you card from Jane Siefker.

We're all aware that the upcoming **Paper Airplane Contest**, will be neither meaningful nor a permanent fix for the university's morale problem but it will be fun. The minutes from the PAC Committee are attached to the January 20 minutes of our regular meeting.

Carnation Sale:

Thanks to everyone who helped with the carnation sale: volunteer workers Renee Rainey, Marva Hampton, and Cathy Swatek, who helped sell carnations in the Hall of Governors after other volunteers, Donna Finn, Stephanie Wenzel, Cindy Woodard, Karen Stuenkel, Janice Washington, Renee Rainey, Rhonda Jackson, and Kathy Miller had sorted, wrapped, and delivered the 300 pre-sold carnations. Donated supplies of tissue paper (Donna Finn), ribbon (Stephanie Wenzel) and customized delivery tags (Rhonda Jackson) gave the carnations a festive and special look. Thanks to the fast work of Donna Finn, we have the totals tallied and have a profit of \$166.

Committee Reports:

1 – EAC Report, Cathy Swatek: no report, Cathy did not attend meeting.

2 – Governance Committee, Eric Nicholson:

The Governance Committee (Eric, Jana Sheely, Karen Sinwelski, Annie Ware, and Cindy Woodard) met, recommended the names for the election committee, which was seconded and passed. GSU's Safety Committee has been reformed by John Tuohy and Gary Lyons; President Miller has been asked to represent CSS. The committee tours GSU weekly to find issues and/or improprieties pertaining to safety. President Miller requested a volunteer to serve on this committee in her place; Donna Finn volunteered. It was moved, seconded, and approved that Donna will represent CSS.

3 – Civil Service Affairs Committee, Chair is Vacant, report by Kathy Miller:

Members are Donna Finn (Interim Chair), Renee Rainey, Janice Washington, Annie Ware, Dorothy Sanders, Cindy Matthias, and Scott Smith. The committee will meet to select a permanent chair; additional members are welcome. We are co-sponsoring a **First Friday** on March 18, on the Library Balcony. Donna Finn will supply the wine remaining from Civil Service Day; Kathy Miller will arrange with Aramark for food and set-up.

4 – Scholarship Committee, Louis Schultz:

No applications received to date; an announcement should be made that we are still accepting applications.

5 – Grievance Committee: Karen Stuenkel, Interim Chair: No current grievances.

6 – Finance Committee, Karen Stuenkel:

Civil Service Day raffle proceeds were \$379; DVD profit is \$80.

Old Business:

Cookbook? President Miller will talk with Rhonda Jackson on status of this project.

The meeting was adjourned by President Miller at 11:50.