

Staff Advisory Committee
November 11, 2010
President's Conference Room

Present: Susan Henry (chair), Patrena Hicks, Kaye Loftis, Tammy Martin, Randa Thompson, Donna Warren, and Cari Williams

Others Present: President Bell, Terri Taylor

President's Comments

The TBR has a new chancellor, Mr. John Morgan. President Bell stated that Chancellor Morgan is no stranger to the TBR or Tennessee Tech, and that TTU is excited about his leadership. Along with new leadership at the TBR level, recent election results caused dramatic changes in state legislators, and it is considered a new day in legislation.

The University is now in the third and final year of a plan designed to place the institution in a position to operate effectively without dependence on stimulus funds or one-time MOE funds. Because TTU committed to and made budget cuts before stimulus money was distributed, the University faces a relatively stable future going into next year. Sales tax collections are slightly up, and the University anticipates a one-percent budget reduction for 2011-2012. State funding was not available for the proposed bonus, but University officials are reviewing budgets to possibly come up with an across-the-board salary increase for employees in the near future.

President Bell commented that since many second shift custodial staff services recently changed to third shift extra precaution should be taken to ensure that doors and windows are locked when offices close for the day.

TTU will again host the BlueCross Bowl of TSSAA High School Football Championships. This economic event, set for December 2-4, has a \$1 million impact on the Cookeville community and provides publicity exposure for TTU via television and also attendees visiting campus, many for the first time. Announcements regarding volunteer opportunities and adjustments in parking for the three-day event are forthcoming. If the opportunity arises, efforts should be made to welcome visitors to the campus and to Cookeville.

Congratulations to the recipients of the Outstanding Staff Awards for 2010—Rebecca Asher and Tammy Martin. Also, two individuals recently named as Tech Ambassadors are Melanie Hutcherson and Claudette Venters.

President Bell announced the appointment of a TTU Campus Task Force to review safety measures on campus, in particular Dixie Avenue.

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Non-Faculty Grievance Pool—Motion by Ms. Loftis to approve the Non-Faculty Grievance Pool as proposed by HR Director Mike Cowan. Ms. Warren seconded. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Suggestions and Comments

Suggestions/comments with *responses* prepared by President Bell:

Lunches/brunches/dinners that are funded by TTU/state dollars. I'd rather have a department party with co-employees and friends. *Many events are held to honor groups or recognize people as a minimal means to say Thank You. With no pay increases for several years, events are used to show appreciation. Also, many cultivation events are held to build relations for future partnerships.*

Any social activities that involve any kind of alcohol should be cut. Alcohol is very expensive and definitely not necessary. *Certain constituents have this expectation for certain events, and no state funds are used to purchase alcohol. Only private funds are used for the purchase of alcohol for any University-related event.*

Christmas cards from the President to all the employees should be cut out. The cost of the cards, labels, and postage has to be enormous. Cards are meant for people you know. *All expenses associated with the President's Christmas card are paid by privately donated funds. The card is also used as a means of invitation for the Open House and Clerical and Support Staff Luncheon held each year.*

Service pins/awards are expensive and most people could care less. *The importance of recognizing individuals for years of service or for providing exemplary service remains to be a priority for the current administration and will remain so unless the overall consensus of the University indicates such recognitions are not necessary.*

*The labor you pay out to do these things are ridiculous and state dollars are being squandered.

*Most of us would rather have the money for all these expenses....

Suggestions/comments with *responses* prepared by Mr. Binkley and Dr. Stinson:

Why is TTU still using so many outside contractors when there are people in house that can do many of the jobs that contractors are being hired for? Facilities can't do all the jobs but there are many that can be done but extra money is used to pay outside contractors to do them. If TTU wants to save money, use the labor that you have.

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Response by Mr. Binkley: Most of the work done by outside contractors fall into two general categories: 1) Renovations, and 2) Contracted Maintenance Work. Renovations to buildings are normally outsourced to general contractors due to the fact that the University utilizes its maintenance staff for ordinary and routine maintenance (repairing doors and windows, leaking plumbing fixtures, scheduled painting of buildings, masonry repairs, etc.). The level of staffing in each of the trades areas reflects historical needs and projected upkeep forecasts for the University's facilities. Renovations require a larger workforce with concentrated work requirements to complete a job in a specified period of time. Although skills to do the renovation may be present in current Facilities workforce, the needed maintenance of the facilities would be compromised or not done whatsoever. Additionally, overtime pay would be required to accomplish both tasks simultaneously, which would not meet budgetary restrictions which the University has in place with reduced state funding.

Dr. Stinson's additional comment: We are continuously reviewing Facilities' operations for improvements in efficiencies and cost savings. Shortly we will have APPA (Association of Physical Plant Administrators) on our campus to review and give us feedback on how our operations compare with national standards. How we use our workforce will be one of the things the reviewers will look at.

When an outside contractor doesn't fix something right the first time why does TTU pay them to come back and do it again? Example: If an elevator on campus goes down TTU pays for Kone Elevator maintenance to fix it. If, after being fixed it does the same thing the next day, TTU pays for them to fix it again. The same thing with other contractors. If they fix something and it is not done correctly, TTU pays them 2, 3, 4 or more times to come back and do it again. There are only so many visits allowed on some contracts, after that TTU pays per visit. What is the incentive to have it fixed right the first time?

Response from Mr. Binkley: Many of the services provided by outside contractors servicing equipment on the University's campuses require specialized training and skills. Examples of such services would include, but are not limited to, elevator repair, fire detection and sprinkler systems, and equipment maintenance (such as copiers, scientific equipment, etc.). Most of these services also require special insurance to protect the University and its faculty, staff and students from liability and safety concerns if safety maintenance and repairs are not done properly. The State of Tennessee, as well as the University, annually bids and awards contracts for these and other services due to the special training and skills required to do the job and the overall liability of entities doing the work.

In both cases, the University explores current staffing levels, skills needed, liability concerns and timing requirements for all its maintenance, repairs, and renovation requirements. All areas are reviewed periodically to best determine whether the work is best performed with University staff or outsourced to outside contractors.

Dr. Stinson's additional comment: To address the case of the elevator example provided, more detail would be needed to determine whether this work could be performed in-house. Elevators, fire alarms, and other equipment that are related to safety require certified workers to perform service on the equipment. Generally, the contract provides for no additional compensation should the outside contractor have to return to correct a problem.

Suggestion/comment with response provided by Mr. Binkley:

Put a parking garage at the Prescott School location. Parking is terrible.

The idea of campus parking garage(s) was addressed in the latest Update to Campus Master Plan released earlier this year. A feasibility study will be performed to determine probable cost and location(s). The study will probably be done during 2011, with any design and construction done at a later date. An issue with parking garages in general is the cost of such a structure will be borne by actual users paying a fee that can cover both the principle and interest on bonds that would have to be issued for the project. The State of Tennessee will not fund parking garages. The cost of parking passes for a garage would vastly exceed what faculty, staff and students at Tennessee Tech now pay. It could easily be six to ten times current parking decal costs per person to fund the cost of the project. The feasibility study would clarify many of these issues.

At present time, Prescott Middle School was not one of the proposed sites for a garage contained in the Master Plan.

Suggestion/comment with response provided by Dr. Stinson:

Given the current state of affairs regarding our budget, I feel you could save a lot of money by not doubling up on parking ticket notices – sending them to the home and work. Why not just email us? Just saying ---

The Business Office is responsible for notifying individuals of their responsibility to either pay a traffic/parking fine or file an appeal with the University Traffic Appeal Committee within 15 days of the issuance date.

Students receive a system generated email from the Bursar each time a traffic fine is posted to their student account. No paper letters are issued unless the student ceases to be enrolled and the amount due becomes delinquent.

*In the matter of **faculty and staff** tickets, a significant number of University employees do not have ready access to a computer and cannot regularly access email. Furthermore, some ticket recipients are employees of contracted service entities, and we do not have access to their*

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individual email addresses. Rather than devoting personnel time to determining which employees have email access and which do not, it is more expeditious to consistently send paper mail to all individuals.

Since payroll deductions are a very sensitive issue, we make the extra effort to send letters to both home and work to ensure that each individual is adequately informed regarding the consequences of not resolving the fine promptly.

Given the usual number of faculty and staff tickets issued annually, we estimate the direct cost of these mailings to be only about \$100.

Suggestion/comment with response provided by Director of Dining Services Sam Holm:

Food places on campus should stay open later and on weekends. The Grill Nation line at night or on weekends is ridiculous. Thanks a-mil!

Each spring we review the food operation and look for ways to improve service, food variety, food quality and customer service. The easy answer is to say "open everything all the time." This may solve all service and variety issues; however, the expense would greatly drive up the cost of on campus food service. We have to find the balance of service and price. We have formed a food service committee that meets once a month to discuss these types of topics. The committee group has students, faculty and staff members. I would encourage students to contact myself or your student government with questions or concerns that can be brought to the food service committee. If students want food places to stay open longer with more areas available we certainly can put that into the mix as we review next year's rates and food offerings. If someone wants to attend the meetings that would be allowed, but we would need to know at least one day ahead of time because Chartwells feeds the group. Please call the Chartwells' Office at 372-3276 to obtain meeting schedule and confirm meeting attendance. Committee members include Chartwells' staff (Sam, Walt, Buck, Teresa, and Veronica), Darla Wilhite, Mandy Thatcher, Jeff Young, as well as three current students.

On an upbeat note, SAC Chair Henry reported that positive comments are routinely reported on the upkeep of the campus grounds and the beautification efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Terri Taylor, Recorder