Meeting Minutes

Meeting called to order by Joy Landis at 11:00 am.

Ex Officio: Terry Curry, Donna Zischke
Guest: Provost Kim Wilcox
Absent: Donna Ullrich, Robert Brown, Paul Streng, Andrew McCullough

Motion to accept the agenda: No changes to the agenda.

Motion to approve November minutes: Barbara Kolar, seconded by Mike Rich.

Old Business:
- Proposed Professional Development Reinstatement: Next Steps
  - Provost Wilcox expressed that one of the main attributes of the specialist classification is the ability to be flexible; that’s allowed MSU to do some very good things. He understands that the vast majority of the previous professional development program went to credit courses (90%), and asked whether the committee members agreed that this was the most important use for the funds.
  - Several members, including Sarah Handspike, Kristy Dumont and Francoise Bigelow, indicated that from personal experience, these funds were essential to being able to take courses and obtain degrees or certificates that allow us to do our jobs better.
  - The Provost indicated that he was in support of providing professional development to specialists, but he wants to make sure that we develop a “smart” program, which may not necessarily resemble the previous lump-sum, first-come, first-served program. He also expressed that he felt professional development in the form of credit courses seemed to be the most urgent need for these funds, and that it is his desire for colleges and departments to cover the costs of other career-related opportunities, such as travel to conferences. However, he recognized that some units are more supportive of these activities than others.
  - In terms of next steps, the Provost will speak with Terry Curry and Donna Zischke to come up with a plan for specialist professional development that he hopes will best meet our needs.
  - If ASAC wants to provide additional input, such as suggestions on eligibility, we can send information to Terry & Donna. There is an old program description at the HR website.
Kristy Dumont has a hard copy.

Conversation with the Provost:

- We asked, “What is your take on where MSU stands in the Big Ten, with respect to professional development for specialists?” The Provost indicated that, as a whole, the university provides these benefits to most, though not all, employees. We don’t have as much money per employee as some of these other schools. We also try to do more than any of these schools (medical, veterinary, music, engineering, business); we’re spreading our dollars a little thinner, and this can create frustration.
- The Provost thanked the committee for their service on ASAC and for what we and our colleagues have accomplished in the last couple of years. We’ve moved along pretty smoothly through a 10% budget cut as a result of the efforts of many people.
- The Provost asked about the general morale on campus. Members shared that it’s been difficult to have our offices downsized, but everyone is working harder to make up for the smaller staff. There is a sense of more optimism than pessimism. This reinstatement of professional development support will be an important gesture to specialists. It will help them to see that the university values them.
- We asked, “What is the overall cost of the EBS program?” The Provost stated that EBS was set up over 4-5 years at a cost of $115 million, and $14-15 million annually for software licenses, maintenance, etc. MSU is one of the last universities to make this switch, and the cost is much less than nearly any other university has spent.
- We raised the issue of the report that MSU has $750 million, but all but $8 million is encumbered. The Provost indicated that our budget goes up and down; the snapshot was taken when we had just received tuition. Terry Curry shared that a lot of the encumbered dollars are for EBS, building upgrades, capital projects (for which there was once state funding to support, but is no longer). For instance, many of the steam tunnels under campus are wearing out and need to be replaced.
- We asked, “What is the latest on the FRIB?” The Provost shared that this is a $700 million project, including $94 million from the state and the rest from the Department of Energy. He thinks that while continued federal support is uncertain, he is more optimist than the media might portray it. We hope to have FRIB up and running by 2017. If the next review is successful, we’ll start breaking ground, and at that point we’ll be pretty well committed.
- We asked, “What is MSU’s status within the AAU?” The Provost said that MSU ends up in the second half of the Association of American Universities, a fairly prestigious association. There are no membership rules; you get voted in or out by the membership. The most important implicit criteria is external research funding, where we are currently vulnerable (bottom 10). We’re not on the verge of being cut like Syracuse and Nebraska were. MSU does an awful lot very well; we get measured in
a small part of what we do compared to others that are only doing work in that part. The FRIB will help MSU’s image. We expect to get DoE funding each year to run the facility ($25-50 million). NSF is currently giving us $25 million per year for the Cyclotron.

- We asked, “What are expectations for the Broad Museum?” The Provost explained some of the challenges with the building of the museum, and that the opening will thus be delayed until the fall, when the students are back in classes. It will be a landmark for people driving down Grand River.

- We asked, “What is the prognosis for the budget next year?” The Provost stated that MSU will get the budget today or tomorrow; the expectation is that the Governor will approve a formula for funding that is attached to metrics (e.g. enrollment, tuition rates, research). Governor has said he’s done cutting higher education, and may increase the budget this coming year (in 3-4% range). Biggest fear is the potential for a cap on tuition. Universities run at about a 3.4% inflation rate (we have expensive people and equipment). We’re about 70% tuition funded and 30% state funded. So, if state doesn’t increase our budget, we have to increase tuition more. We’re as tuition-dependent as most other universities now. He is hopeful that not much will change in the next year.

- We asked, “Will we continue to increase enrollment?” The Provost told us that target enrollment is 47,500; MSU added a couple of hundred students to the admission’s approval rate last year, thinking that we were going to end up low. But enrollments in each category went up. We have two residence halls offline right now for upgrades, which has exacerbated the transitional housing issue.

- We asked, “What is the plan for Spartan Village?” The Provost shared that it will be maintained for the short-term, but not for the long-term. Several more buildings are slated to come down. They have become important for international students, but these buildings are 60 years old and in poor shape. It’s appealing land for other options. There may be an opportunity for some retail. There’s been discussion about maximizing the transportation hub (bus, train and highways cross). There’s been discussion about an international-flavored, transportation-oriented development.

- We asked, “Why not use this space for green/recreational space (e.g. soccer fields)” The Provost agreed there aren’t enough intramural spaces.

- Update from Brownbag Committee – Barbara indicated that we’re all set for the Specialist brownbag next week.
- Update from Election Committee - Kristy said that they are looking at dates for election committee; Barbara provided all materials from last year.

**Update by Chair Joy Landis:**
- Meant to introduce Andrew McCullough, but he was not present.

**Update by Terry Curry:**
- We should look at having the Provost to at least one ASAC meeting per year.
- Bob Coldwell is the new Ombudsperson; Board of Trustee meeting next Friday, he will be appointed and the title will be changed from “Ombudsman” to “Ombudsperson.”
- Faculty Grievance Official – committee has recommended two individuals to the Provost, hopefully someone will be named shortly.
- All University Awards Convocation is February 14 at 3pm at the Wharton Center and all are invited to attend.
- In March, Terry Curry sends out the information about the next round of awards, and nominations are due in late September; he encourages that the process get started before the end of the spring semester.

**New Business:**
- None.

**Motion to adjourn** by Kristy, seconded by Sandy.

**Meeting adjourned:** at 12:13pm.

**Learning Session**, the Specialist Advancement Panel, is scheduled for January 24, at 10am in Erickson Hall.

**Attachment:** None

**Next scheduled meeting:** February 16, 11 AM