

MINUTES
CLASSIFIED SENATE
12/17/04

The Classified Senate met Friday, December 17, 2004, at 3:00 p.m., Frontier Room, Memorial Union.

1. Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by President Phil Woodford.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Nancy Cunningham, Jan Cutright, Vickie Fisher, Joe Geist, Donetta Lang, Karen McCullough, Lesly Rupp, Darlene Schippers, Cheryl Schmeidler, and Phil Woodford.

Members absent: Angela Barger, Robert Degenhardt, Connie Ernst, Leanna Fross, Jordan Munsch, Cindy Weigel.

Guests: Senator Janis Lee, Representative Eber Phelps, and Debra Prideaux, Director of Alumni/Governmental Relations.

3. Approval of November 9, 2004 Minutes

Vickie Fisher and Jan Cutright made and seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2004 meeting. The motion passed.

4. Treasurer's Report

Account balances for Classified Senate:

Endowment Scholarships	Beginning Balance	\$1840.12
	Ending Balance	\$1986.62
Hospitality Fund	Balance	\$ 19.69
OOE	Balance	\$ 530.94

5. Committee Reports

Orientation: Cheryl Stramel, Printer Senior, separated from the university. Jeffrey Kroeger, Equipment Operator, was appointed in the Grounds department. Amie Wright was promoted to Administrative Specialist, Dean, College of Education & Technology office. Chantelle Buxton was appointed Sr. Administrative Assistant, Leadership Studies.

Legislative: Janis Lee and Eber Phelps will be joining us today to discuss the Kansas Council of Classified Senates Position Paper.

Social: A thank you card was received from Lu Walton. Sympathy cards will be sent to Deb Storer, whose sister passed away, to Allen Rohr, whose sister-in-law passed away, and to Alan Helget, whose sister passed away. A congratulatory card will be sent to Frances Gordon who recently retired.

Scholarship: The scholarship committee received two applications and awarded scholarships to Kristin Lindsten, Career Services and Laure Gross, Accounting & Information Systems.

6. Old Business

There was no old business.

7. New Business

A. Report on Meeting with the Board of Regents

Phil Woodford and other Regents Classified Senate Presidents met with the Board of Regents on Dec. 10th. The proposal for KU to withdraw from the civil service plan was discussed. The Board supports legislation to give KU the authority for currently classified employees to become regents employees. The decision not to be classified will be decided institution by institution. Pay will be determined by the university. Retirement, medical insurance and other benefits will stay the same. The proposal at KU is, if 3% is available for raises, everyone would receive 2% and the remaining 1% would be distributed by merit.

B. Discussion with Senator Janis Lee and Representative Eber Phelps

Phil Woodford noted that of all the points on the Kansas Council of Classified Senates Position Paper, salaries and health insurance are the two most important issues. Senator Lee stated that the legislature had passed a bill in the past authorizing the state to pay all the cost in participating in Health Wave for state employees eligible for Health Wave, but that the bill has not been funded. The governor is trying to combine all state agencies into one group for more bargaining power when health insurance rates are set. The increase in insurance co-pay is the result of high utilization by state employees. If employees pay more, the thought was that they would be more careful in scheduling only necessary medical procedures. It was noted that 30% of some employees' salaries go to pay health insurance premiums. For an employee, spouse and family plan, the premium is over \$500/month. Senator Lee noted that of the \$30M increase in health insurance costs last year, the state picked up \$23M of that.

Note: Beginning in January 2005, the cost for family health care - Kansas Choice & prescription coverage only - for employees earning less than \$25,000 is \$255.14 per pay period. Health care premiums are deducted from 24 of 26 paychecks per year. For someone starting in range 11 (\$8.49 per hour), this is almost **35%** of their paycheck. Dental (\$14.00) and vision coverage (\$5.97-basic or \$9.77-enhanced) would cost extra per pay period.

The cost for Kansas Choice and prescription coverage increases (but not substantially) for those earning \$25,000 - \$44,500 (\$261.61 per pay period) and for those earning over \$44,500 (\$267.90). Dental and vision coverage cost the same regardless of pay range.

Phil explained that \$9.06/hour is a poverty level wage. On the current pay matrix, the lowest position at FHSU is Range 11, step 4. There are three classifications that fall below a poverty level wage at FHSU: Office Assistant, Custodial Specialist, and Custodial Crew Leader, all of which start at \$8.49/hour. A living wage is considered to be \$11.93/hour. Employees in ranges 11-17 all start below a living wage.

On the position paper, the requested 6.2% salary increase covers the 3.7% that the cost of living went up last year, as well as a one-step movement on the pay matrix (2.5%).

In discussion about reducing the vesting period to five years for KPERS, Senator Lee noted that KPERS guarantees a return once an employee is vested. Not all retirement plans have this guarantee.

The question was asked why the budget is seemingly balanced on the backs of state employees and why state employee pay raises are always considered at the end of the legislative session? Senator Lee explained how the budget is based on revenue estimates and one major source of income, income tax revenue, is not known until mid-April. K-12 educators also ask this same question, why are they considered last?

Representative Phelps questioned the statement on the position paper supporting a merit based pay system. Phil Woodford noted that he personally supports this, but he doesn't speak for every employee at FHSU. As a group, the Kansas Council of Classified Senates voted to include this on the position paper. Nancy Cunningham felt that there has to be a way to quantify merit, i.e. additional training, additional responsibilities, etc. Several senators addressed the issue of additional duties being added with no additional compensation. Cheryl Schmeidler pointed out the quantifier in the position paper statement, "if unable to fund and modify currently unfunded matrix", replace the pay matrix with a merit based system.

Tips for communicating with legislators:

Talk about the issue that you support, don't refer only to the bill number. Bills change and evolve throughout the session. You may be asking the legislator to support something that no longer reflects the issue you are concerned about.

Become acquainted with your legislator. Be persistent.

Don't flood legislators' e-mails by having numerous employees forward the same message. These will all be deleted. Explain why you support or oppose an issue under consideration.

List Hays, Kansas in the subject line to assist legislators in prioritizing e-mails from constituents. Constituents will receive responses first.

Call early to schedule appointments with legislators on Legislative Information Day. The House schedules meetings in the morning and the Senate has afternoon meetings.

We deeply appreciate the time Senator Lee and Representative Phelps spent meeting with us. Phil presented each of them with a holiday calendar featuring scenes of campus on it.

8. Announcements

The next regular Senate meeting will be on Tuesday, January 11, 2005, at 3:30 p.m., in the Prairie Room, Memorial Union.

Legislative Information Day will be Tuesday, February 8, in Topeka.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Cheryl Schmeidler
Secretary/Treasurer