

Chair's Report  
October 2021  
Submitted by John Smith

Does anyone else have the feeling our last full senate meeting was just like a week ago? Things are moving at an incredible pace right now. Many months feel like they fly by but this last one, for some reason, seems especially so. The unfortunate by-product of that is the tiring sensation I am talking to so many people about. Almost to a person, everyone I talk to is saying something along the lines of it feeling like it should be the end of the semester and not just past Fall Break. I don't have an answer to the scenario other than take care of yourself and each other. Every little chance we have to make someone else laugh or just get a breath for a few seconds is a good thing right now. My pastor tells us the best way to make yourself feel better is to do something good for someone else. Forgive me for waxing philosophically here for a minute, but that's what each of us in the Staff Senate are doing. Sometimes I think it's good for us to ponder that for a minute or two. I hope we all catch a little energy and encouragement from our work in the senate.

I started sending out the new OCM communication thinking it was going to be a daily thing but it comes to me every few days. Some days it comes concurrently and then I do not get one for several days. Anyway, I am sending them as I receive them, often with additional information.

**Covid:** Last month President Biden had just made his statement about mandates for vaccinations for employers of 100 or more people. I reported at that time we were waiting for an interpretation from OSHA about whether that applied to us, not being federal employees, or not. We are still waiting for that. We really thought we might have it the week after our meeting but.....

We continue to make strides on the vaccination front. Here are the vaccination rates as of October 4. Students, 86.1%. Faculty 82% and Staff 84.4%. Those numbers have risen dramatically since the September report.

We are also expecting direction on booster vaccinations soon. President Biden's plan included mandating booster shots but there have been a number of medical advisors recommend holding off on boosters until more testing is completed. The

three different vaccines available in the US will probably have different recommendations for each one.

We just completed two weeks of flu vaccinations. I hope everyone took advantage of that but if not, they are available on a walk-in basis at both Campus Health locations, one on the HSC Campus and the other at Cardinal Station.

**Threlkeld Hall:** The “New Threlkeld” is on schedule and on budget. It will be a mirror project to the new hall that opened this fall. It should open next fall for occupancy. The new Denny Crum Hall is a little over budget due to escalating cost of supplies but there are some things that can be done to bring that back to on budget.

**Board of Trustees:** The Board of Trustees had Committee Meeting Day on Sept. 23. During this meeting the new ULH health insurance plan was announced. I am excited about the plan as it eliminates co-pays for both primary care and specialist visits and also has a zero deductible. The size of our total health care system after the acquisition of the Jewish Hospital system has allowed this new option.

We heard a report on the new Center for Engaged Learning. Gail DePuy will be taking a lead role in the center which will combine many areas such as internships, apprenticeships, service learning, student teaching, practicums, research, capstone projects, study abroad, field experiences and more, into an intentional center of coordination. Students who have participated in engaged learning are in higher demand than others leading to improved retention and academic success.

The Board also approved a new Bachelor of Science in General Studies. The program will be limited to returning learners who have some college credit already but have not completed a degree. Many of those are in existing jobs where a degree of any type qualifies them for advancement and raises. This program will be completely online. I am excited for this particular program. There are thousands of people just in Jefferson County that would benefit from the program. We also approved a new Master of Science in Health Professions Education. The health profession field is expanding rapidly and represents a significant amount of job opportunities for graduates with this degree.

We heard a budget update from Dan Durbin. The news is things continue to project a balanced and improving budget. “Cash on hand” is a term many of us have become too familiar with than we would like. It is just what it sounds like. With no additional revenue generation, how many days could the university function with existing funds. This is a highly significant factor in all universities accreditation. In December of 2018 we had as little as 20 days, cash in hand. Today we have almost 85 days. That is a very noteworthy improvement.

We have become very enrollment driven. Final numbers are still being developed but undergraduate enrollment is down. Professional enrollment is up a little. Professional tuition is higher than undergraduate. The question is, is professional enrollment up enough to offset the decline in undergraduate. For us, this is especially significant as it will be a major factor in whether the proposed 1% raise in January is possible or not. Along with the actual enrollment figures will be the retention of fall students to the spring minus the December graduates. We’ve talked about that before. Anything we can do to increase retention is not only good for the student but good for us at the same time.

The Foundation had a crazy good year. We had Keith Sherman, Executive Director/COO of the Foundation with us recently when he reported on the lack of any underwater endowment funds and what a tremendous improvement that represents. At that time he also told us that the Foundation attempts to grow accounts at around a 6% rate as we are not investing in high risk opportunities. This past year we earned over a 32% growth rate. That is amazing in the world of foundation operations nation-wide. The good news for the University is that will represent an increased spend, or contribution to the University in the future. The “spend” is typically around that 6% number but while the % may remain the same, 6% of a larger base represents a larger contribution. We changed investment firms in March of 2020. It is significant to note that we have outperformed the benchmark in every quarter since that time so we are doing well.

### **Meetings Attended:**

**Tuesday, September 14, Council on Post-Secondary Education, 8:00 AM (Frankfort)**

**Tuesday, September 14, Neeli Senior Leadership, 9:00**

**Tuesday, September 14, Staff Senate Full Meeting, 2:30**

**Wednesday, September 15, Bigelow Hall, 8:30**

**Wednesday, September 15, Workday Demonstration, 9:00**

**Wednesday, September 15, Executive Budget Steering Committee, 2:00**

**Thursday, September 16, Workday Demonstration, 9:00**

**Thursday, September 16, FCA, Noon**

**Tuesday, September 21, Workday Demonstration, 9:00**

**Wednesday, September 22, Workday Demonstration, 9:00**

**Thursday, September 23, Workday Demonstration, 9:00**

**Thursday, September 23, Board of Trustees, 1:00**

**Monday, October 4, HSC Use, Toni Ganzel, 3:00**

**Tuesday, October 5, Senior Leadership Team, 9:00**

**Wednesday, October 6, Mark Watkins, 9:00**

**Thursday, October 7, FCA, Noon**

**Monday, October 11, Huron Workday, 9:00**

**Monday, October 11, Covid Coordinating Committee, 4:00**