

**MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Board of Governors Minutes**  
**January 19, 2024**  
**Billingsly Student Center**  
**Room 310**

The January 19, 2024, meeting of the Missouri Southern State University Board of Governors was called to order by Chairwoman Anita Oplotnik. Governors in attendance were Carlos Haley, T. Mark Elliott, Anita Oplotnik, Dr. Benjamin Rosenberg, Mariann Morgan, Alison Hershewe and Michael Seibert.

Others in attendance were Dr. Jean Coltharp, Peter Edwards, Alicia Hughes, Rob Mallory, Dr. Brad Hodson, Dr. Lisa Toms, Dr. Dean Van Galen, Dr. Shellie Hewitt, Linda Eis, Maddox Studdard, Mark Scott, and Jeanie Nice.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairwoman Oplotnik called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Governor Oplotnik introduced the Board's newest member, Maddox Studdard, who was appointed by Missouri Governor Mike Parson as the Student Representative to the Board on December 22 with his term ending on December 31, 2025.

There was a special recognition of long-serving member and leader of the MSSU Board of Governors, William (Bill) Gipson with a resolution for the Board to consider. Resolution was read by Governor Oplotnik.

*A motion was made by T. Mark Elliott and seconded by Alison Hershewe to approve the resolution recognizing William Gipson. Motion passed unanimously. (A copy of the resolution is archived in the permanent record book).*

A framed copy of the resolution signed by Governor Oplotnik and Dr. Dean Van Galen was presented to Bill Gipson.

The Board then entertained a request to name a major campus facility, specifically, the Health Science Innovation Center. Dr. Dean Van Galen provided the background on the request. Mr. Rudy Farber, Chairman of Community Bank and Trust, addressed the board requesting the Health Science Innovation Center be named after former Senator Roy Blunt. Dr. Van Galen explained how the process was reviewed by the naming committee and the naming committee approved the request to name the Health Science Innovation Center the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center.

*A motion was made by Alison Hershewe and seconded by Carlos Haley to approve the recommendation to establish the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center. Motion passed unanimously.*

**MINUTES**

Chairwoman Oplotnik asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the November 10, 2023 Board meeting; none were noted.

*A motion was made by Alison Hershewe and seconded by Benjamin Rosenberg to approve minutes of the November 10, 2023 Board meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously. (Minutes are archived in*

*the permanent record book).*

**President (Dr. Dean Van Galen):**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Van Galen’s report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

It was quite a week at Missouri Southern—the start of the spring semester, weather challenges, and responding to the water incident in Hearnes Hall. I am grateful for the flexibility and the collaborative spirit that has been evident on our campus. Special thanks to those staff including facilities services, university police, and information technology for their amazing responsiveness to campus needs as we adjust to Hearnes Hall being off-line for the spring semester.

**Milestones and Recognitions**

In my written report to the Board, I highlight several milestones and recognitions that occurred in December including the annual holiday brunch and ceremony where we recognized some of our outstanding staff. The recipients of our Superior Service Award were Donna Pooley, Administrative Assistant in the Department of Art and Design, and Brenda Beasley, Project Manager in Academic Affairs. Both were cited for the excellence of their work. We are indeed fortunate to have many talented and committed staff who support our university’s educational mission in so many ways.

**Willcoxon Innovation in Health Sciences Summit**

Philanthropic support of the University’s mission is making a difference at Missouri Southern, and the *Lions Forward* campaign continues to inspire new levels of support and impact. One example of that, you may recall, was in March of 2023 when we celebrated a \$1 million gift from Dr. Bob and Dot Willcoxon to support the health sciences at MSSU. In my report, I have highlighted one of the impacts of that generosity. The inaugural *Willcoxon Innovation in Health Sciences Summit* will take place April 11-12 on the MSSU campus. The Summit will feature sessions focused on innovation and important developments that will shape the future of healthcare and the health sciences. We anticipate strong participation from students, educators, healthcare practitioners, and communities from across the region. I’m pleased to share with the Board that the keynote address for the Summit will be delivered by Dr. Christa Martin, Chief Scientific Officer at Geisinger Health System. Geisinger serves central and northeast Pennsylvania and is widely recognized for use of genomics and electronic health records to inform its healthcare practices. Dr. Martin leads Geisinger’s systemwide clinical research initiatives in areas including precision health, genomics, data science, population health, bioethics, and clinical trials. I’ve had the opportunity to visit with Dr. Martin via Zoom and know that she will be an excellent and thought-provoking speaker.

**Looking Ahead to the Legislative Session**

The 2024 legislative session is underway, and Governor Parson’s State of the State address is scheduled for January 24 at which time we will learn about his higher education budget and policy proposals. Missouri Southern’s priorities were presented to regional legislators at a meeting on November 14<sup>th</sup> and face-to-face meetings with key legislators in Jefferson City are planned for February 1<sup>st</sup>. Related to the expansion of our statewide mission, Senator Jill Carter has filed Senate Bill 907 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 22 that would add immersive learning experiences and health and life sciences to our statewide mission. I anticipate speaking in support of one or both of those measures at a Senate hearing within the next two weeks. Representative Cody Smith is prepared to advocate for this legislation when it arrives in the House.

### **Anticipating a Bright Year Ahead**

I believe that the year 2024 will be a bright one for Missouri Southern as we look forward to progress in the many areas included in my report. It will also be a year of celebrations, especially in April. On April 6<sup>th</sup> we will host a public kickoff event for the Lions Forward Campaign—providing an opportunity to thank leadership donors and announce a formal campaign goal. And on April 11<sup>th</sup>, connected to the Willcoxon Summit, we are planning a groundbreaking for the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center. As always, the progress is made possible by the work of our staff and faculty, the efforts of our students, and the support of our alumni and community.

### **Executive Vice President (Dr. Brad Hodson):**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Hodson's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

#### **Lion Village**

In my report you will see an update on the Lion Village water remediation from the incident that occurred on October 15<sup>th</sup>. We were able to reopen those 45 rooms to students in 68 days.

#### **Health Science Innovation Center**

We have completed the schematic design phase and are moving into the design development phase. We had a meeting with internal stakeholders on Tuesday of this week. We are moving forward on schedule.

#### **Three-Year Facility Improvement Plan**

In my report you will see a summary of our three-year facilities improvement plan and the progress we have made on three of the projects; Young Gym roof, instructional spaces and Billingsly restrooms.

#### **Endowment Report**

A copy of the endowment report was distributed to the Governors. This report is sent annually to all endowment donors. This year, along with the report, an invitation to attend an Endowment Recognition Night at a basketball game this Wednesday was sent to nearly 300 donors.

### **Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Dr. Lisa Toms):**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Toms' report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

#### **Financial Aid**

2024-25 FAFSA went live on December 30<sup>th</sup>, although it was rolled out as a “soft launch.” Federal Student Aid provided intermittent FAFSA availability with the soft launch, so they could continue to make ongoing updates to the online form. This has caused some frustration with filers nationwide, but things seem to have smoothed out these last two weeks. However, the Department of Education has not released the programming for the new application, which means our Ellucian (Banner) support folks cannot write the code to allow us to pull the FAFSA data into our system. This is not a Missouri Southern problem; it is a nation-wide problem and will cause students issues with being kept informed of their college-going financial situation for months past the normal time. As anticipated, MDHEWD announced that they moved our state's priority FAFSA filing date from February 1<sup>st</sup> to April 1, 2024.

The MSSU Financial Aid Office is promoting FAFSA renewal in all our usual ways: email, texting, and postcard mailers to current students. MSSU Financial Aid Staff are traveling to area high schools to assist at FAFSA nights for incoming students. These events will be on-going through January and February. More high schools than usual are asking for assistance this year with all the FAFSA changes.

We are hosting a FAFSA Fiesta workshop on February 14<sup>th</sup> for all current students and will invite students to attend during FAFSA Frenzy Week of February 15-19.

### **College of Health, Life Science and Education**

The Senior Nursing student cohort completed the most recent round of standardized HESI testing in preparation for the NCLEX, scoring collectively 77 points above the National Benchmark and scoring the highest score of all cohorts for the last three years. The students completed an Obstetrical exam, a Pediatric exam, and a comprehensive Pharmacology exam. The Pharmacology exam was 217 points above the national benchmark. This group is set to graduate in May 2024.

### **Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer (Ms. Linda Eis):**

#### **Southern Summit**

Southern Summit will be put on by our Human Resources department. It is a professional development event that provides sessions that are divided among various learning tracks. It allows campus departments to get together to engage and educate. There will be a keynote speaker during lunch. Sessions will be provided both in person and on Teams. This year's event will be held on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Property Insurance**

We review our insurance policy costs every year and it has been increasing year after year. This is a nationwide issue as the market has had extreme losses from numerous disasters. The pandemic did not help as now we have less providers. For FY2025, Missouri universities have grouped together to secure property insurance to give us a better rate than securing insurance on our own.

#### **FY25 Budget**

The tuition work group is focused on tuition and fee structure. State appropriations will be determined later in the state legislative session. Additional known expenses will include increases in property insurance, MOSERS retirement contributions, continued maintenance and capital projects, and technology needs.

### **Presentation of the financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2023**

#### **Cash Graph:**

Ms. Eis noted the balance at the end of December 31, 2023, was \$19.3M. This is \$1.9M over the prior year.

#### **Statement of Net Position:**

**Total Assets:** \$184M

**Total Liabilities :** \$135M

**Net Position :** \$49M

#### **Comparative Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Changes in Net Position (difference column):**

- **Total Operating Revenues:** Reflects an increase of \$1.7M. (made up from an increase in tuition of \$636k and new federal grants for DESE and the Lion Cub Academy at

\$487k)

- **Total Operating Expenses:** Reflects an increase of \$2.2M (compensation increased by \$790k for one-time payments and raises, health insurance decreased by \$773k, scholarships show an increase of \$971k)
- **Non-Operating Revenues:** Reflects an increase of \$223k (State appropriations of \$963k are a big piece of this, as is investment income \$357k)
- **Other Revenues:** Reflects a decrease of \$794k (prior year had TPAC funding, this year we do not)
- **Income Before Other Revenues:**  
Current Year: (\$1.7M)  
Prior Year: (\$1.4M)  
This results in a decrease from Prior Year: \$280k.

*A motion was made by Carlos Haley and seconded by T. Mark Elliott to approve the December 2023 financial statements as presented. Motion passed unanimously. (A copy of the financial statements for December 2023 is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book).*

#### **Dean of Admissions (Dr. Shellie Hewitt)**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Hewitt's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

#### **Upcoming Spring Recruitment Events**

We have two Green and Gold Tour events in February. One at Carl Junction High School and the other at Joplin High School. During these events we will have Admissions and Financial Aid staff available to discuss our academic programs and our scholarships. Roary will be available for photos with the students. We will provide alums who work in the school district with swag they can display in their classroom or office. Junior and senior students can submit their name for a scholarship drawing. We will present two students from each school with a \$1,000 scholarship during their basketball games.

Admissions will also host or participate in several other events this spring including two Lion Pride Visit Days, Transfer Day, and Dual Credit Day.

#### **Marketing Highlights**

URM continues to run general campaigns on social media, digital billboards, and television. We continue to heavily market to Joplin, Springfield, NW Arkansas, and Tulsa year-round and will do two 3-month cycles in the St. Louis area.

Additional targeted marketing campaigns include MKEAP, Healthcare Administration, and Graduate programs including Data Analytics and MBA. We're using a new approach for marketing MKEAP and have seen an increase in applications while digital marketing is cycling through areas. URM is keeping track to ensure what we are doing is successful. For our Graduate programs we are using Google paid search and social media advertising. We are using Data Analytics and MBA as marketing templates in the NW Arkansas and Tulsa areas to help define our audience and shape how we target individual future market campaigns.

#### **Spring Enrollment Highlights**

Overall graduate student enrollment is up 44%. New student enrollment is up 15%. We anticipate the spring semester to show increased enrollment headcount and credit hours at census. International Student enrollment is up 56%.

**Director of Athletics (Mr. Rob Mallory):**

*Note: Highlights of Rob's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**Student-Athlete Academic Success**

Eight programs had a team GPA of 3.25 or higher for the semester. Individually, 246 student-athletes (58%) earned a 3.0 GPA. Of those, 168 earned a 3.5+ (40% of all student-athletes) and 85 earned a perfect 4.0 (20% of all student-athletes). Entering the Spring 2024 semester, the cumulative GPA for all student-athletes is 3.19. The department cumulative GPA has now been at a 3.0 or higher for eleven consecutive semesters.

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gold Award**

The award, which is part of Division II's yearlong 50th anniversary celebration, will recognize two individuals (one male and one female) who have made a lasting and positive impact in Division II over those 50 years. Former MSSU Athletic Director and Coach Sallie Beard was one of 45 finalists for the award.

**Athletic Staff Update**

The new year brings change and new faces to the MSSU Athletic Department staff. There are three new hires in the areas of compliance, operations, and athletic training.

**Fall Sports Highlights**

The 2023 fall sports season has concluded, and there were many notable achievements in competition from Lion student-athletes. The football program continued its year-over-year improvement under Head Coach Atiba Bradley. The volleyball team finished their season 16-15, the first winning season for the program since 2010. The women's cross-country team finished 5th in the NCAA Central Region meet and qualified for the Division II National Championship meet, where they finished 28th. The men's team finished 5th in the Central Region. In the first set of Regional Rankings for Division II golf, the men's team ranks 5th and the women's team 14th.

**Faculty Senate President (Dr. Jean Coltharp):**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Coltharp's report are as follows.*

Faculty Senate voted to dissolve/put on hold the Faculty Information Technology Committee as there is overlap between two IT committees.

The ad hoc committee to reassess Promotion and Tenure standards has allowed departments to review the standards they set. They are also allowing departments to look at what other departments came up with in case they'd like to 'borrow' any ideas. I have heard nothing but excited feedback about this new plan!

**Staff Senate President (Ms. Alicia Hughes):**

*Note: Highlights of Ms. Hughes report are as follows:*

We provided 114 children gifts from the Angel Tree program this year. Since the Angel Tree program began in 2014, 815 children have received gifts. We are currently soliciting wrapping paper, bows, stocking stuffers, etc. as people are shopping for Christmas close-out deals so we have those items ready for next year.

Thank you to all who helped us move out of Hearn Hall. It was an amazing experience. I am so proud of the way everyone helped and welcomed us to our new home.

**Student Representative (Mr. Maddox Studdard):**

Since being newly appointed to the position, he opened the floor up to questions.

**Board Committees:**

**Personnel/Compensation (T. Mark Elliott, Chair):**

The committee met in closed session for their regularly scheduled mid-year review of Dr. Van Galen.

**Academic Affairs (Dr. Benjamin Rosenberg, Chair):**

We had several updates from Dr. Toms. We examined academic changes in some of our programs. We started one new graduate and three new undergraduate programs: MBA in Applied Data Analytics, BA in Supply Chain Management, a certificate in Supply Chain Management and a minor in Supply Chain Management. We dropped three programs due to lack of activity.

*A motion was made by Dr. Benjamin Rosenberg and seconded by Alison Hershewe to approve the proposed academic programs additions and deletions. Motion passed unanimously.*

The committee reviewed the faculty sabbatical recommendations for two faculty: Dr. Rebecca Shriver and Dr. Christine Bentley.

*A motion was made by Dr. Benjamin Rosenberg and seconded by Mariann Morgan to approve the two sabbatical recommendations. Motion passed unanimously.*

Reviewed the Intellectual Property policy and will continue that discussion in our March meeting.

**Budget Audit Committee (Carlos Haley, Chair):**

The committee met to discuss the development of a new undergraduate course fee that will replace some of the fee structure we currently have in place. We plan to have that completed before we start the budget process for the next fiscal year.

We had a healthy discussion about our external audit engagement that will continue at our March meeting. We do have one item that needs the approval of the Board, which is a one-year extension of our current engagement contract with FORVIS.

*A motion was made by Carlos Haley and seconded by Michael Seibert to approve a one-year extension of the contract with FORVIS. Motion passed unanimously.*

Finally, we had a brief summary about purchasing contracts that are available to Missouri Southern to ensure we are supplying the best cost process to the University.

**OLD BUSINESS** – N/A

None was mentioned.

**NEW BUSINESS** – N/A

Upcoming Board engagement opportunities include Commencement on May 11<sup>th</sup> and Board, Bites and Brew on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Future Meeting Date:**

The next meetings of the Board are as scheduled:

January 19, 2024

March 15, 2024

June 13, 2024

*A motion was made by Alison Hershewe and seconded by Carlos Haley to move to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.*

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Board Chair

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Board Secretary