

## Executive Cabinet Meeting Notes

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

9:00 a.m.

**Present:** Dr. Carlos Hernandez, President; Dr. Bernardo Canteñs, Executive Vice President and Provost Ben Telesca, VP for Student Affairs; Dr. Suzanne Harris, Dean of Students; Dr. Bonnie Warnock, Dean; Betse Esparza, Director of University Communications; Dr. Eric Funasaki, Dean; Michelle Lancaster, Director of Academic Affairs; Bonnie Albright, VP for Finance and Operations; April Aultman Becker, AVP Institutional Effectiveness; Dr. Laura Payne, Dean; Janice Espinoza-Valenzuela, recorder

**Remote:** Dr. Jorge Garza, VP for Administrative Services and COO; Dr. Sarah (Sally) Roche, Dean; Dr. Louis Harveson, Associate Provost of Research and Development

**Absent:** Dr. Barbara Tucker, Dean; Paul Herring, Vice President of Advancement; Natalie Sandoval, Executive Director of Enrollment Management; Amanda Workman, Athletic Director

**Start Time:** 9:00 a.m.

### Presentation by Ellucian of Banner SaaS

#### Construction Project in Graves Pierce with Grant Funds

- Dr. Warnock mentioned that Dr. Billy Jack Ray asked when the construction at Graves Pierce would begin. There is an approved grant of \$200,000 earmarked for this project.
- Currently, there is a dividing wall when you walk into the lobby and a hall that makes a U shape. The bottom floor houses the offices.
- There is dead space around the big gym connected to the hall and the HVAC system is located there too.
- The idea is to build two walls and incorporate the dead space to have a larger teaching space/lab.
- Informal estimate with contractors that came to look at it. The original timeline for construction was to begin this summer 2024, but they have pushed it back a year.
- Dr. Warnock wanted to bring this to us, as the Recreation Center may be affected.
- Ben mentioned that we are waiting on engineers with other projects to see if we can piggyback. Bonnie Albright said that we piggybacked Fletcher, so we can't piggyback here and asked if we could piggyback with any other institution.
- Dr. Warnock mentioned that Kinesiology was not in her college at the time of the plans.
- We need to get on this to look at contractors, as construction should be straightforward. It involves taking out the cinder block in between the column walls and moving the door and building two walls.
- We would still need to check with engineering. We should be able to reposition the door without doing anything to the mechanical areas.
- Fire code- do we need more egress doors?
- President asked Bonnie Albright to check with JP, project management, and see if we can move forward. Bonnie said since it is under a million dollars this project will not need to go to RFP.
- There is an additional \$50,000 for equipment. \$200,000 is only for construction. President doesn't feel it will be more than the \$200,000.
- The mechanical room may need to be sealed with cinder blocks which would cost more.
- President asked if there was electrical on the back wall? No, only on the lateral side walls, per Ben.
- Ben mentioned when it was talked about last summer, the equipment already exists. He would check into it.

## Dependent/Spouse Scholarships & Employee Professional Development

- President Hernandez- Draft polices based on what Sam Houston State has in place for dependent and spousal education. Those two features exist under two different sections of IRS code, and this is why we need to separate them. Our current policies are in the training and development section of our policy. Technically, they should only apply to employees, but there is a narrative in there that mixes in dependents and spouses. And provides benefits beyond what are authorized under IRS code.
- Employee Professional Development:
  - The biggest changes are that the employee training component would limit the benefit. It will no longer be free. Currently it is a free education: if approved you can take classes and the university pays 100%. There is no funding for it, just a discounted rate. This requires employees to have a minimum service period.
  - The current policy does not have a service period and the new policy requires a 12-month service period.
  - The current policy has no cost associated with it, but the revised policy discounts everything except statutory tuition. Which means that employees may take a 3-hour class for about \$150.
  - Finally, and most importantly, it limits it to undergraduate and master level programs. It excludes the doctoral programs that are currently non-existent but will soon be offered on our campus. This is for the Employee Professional Development policy.
  - The Employee Professional Development Policy will remain within the training and development section of our policies but will have a variety of different limitations and changes associated with it.
  - Dr. Harris pointed out a discrepancy in Section 5, letter b. It shows the participant may take up to nine credit hours, but in parenthesis, it shows the number 6. It used to be 6. President said that we can revise this.
  - Today is a conversation. We will have time to review and edit the documents. Karlin is also reviewing the documents.
  - Dr. Canteñs asked about section 5, part A: coursework must relate to the employee's current or prospective job duties within their department. Dr. Hernandez said that this section is part of the IRS code for it to be discounted to employees. Example, if you work in accounting and you want to take an art class, then you will need to figure out how it will relate to your current or prospective position. You must be able to justify it.
  - Also, if a requirement of a degree that aligns with your responsibilities, then it is an automatic.
  - Dr. Harveson asked if we had any trends in the use of these policies. No utilization data on the benefit. It is pre-existing. We may be able to dig into the data, but there isn't much.
  - Dr. Warnock mentioned that if they hire someone pursuing a degree, then they decelerate the degree and use this benefit.
  - Employee side, we will try and get some utilization data so it can be shared.
  - Dr. Funasaki asked if employees can do 6 hours and their dependent an additional 6 hours. Currently, it allows for 6 hours for either the employee or their dependent. President said that they are independent policies, so the answer is yes. The employee will be able to take 6 hours and the dependent will be able to take 6 hours also.
  - The dependent benefit is different under the new policy.
  - We aren't deciding these policies today. Today is an open conversation for questions and comments. Please copy Bonnie Albright, Karlin and Dr. Hernandez with your questions or comments.

- Dependent/Spouse Scholarship:
  - We are calling this the Dependent/Spouse Scholarship. The benefit under this program is different in that it doesn't have a cap in the number of hours other than a global cap. Limits to undergraduate degrees only, IRS code, and no limit on the number of hours. It does limit the discount/scholarship to designated tuition only.
  - Fees are not discounted, and statutory tuition is not discounted.
  - The two biggest changes: Limits to undergraduate degrees and any spouses that are pursuing graduate degrees, per IRS Code, graduate degrees are not included in the employee benefit framework.
  - We can offer graduate scholarships to dependent spouses or children so long as they are accompanied by an employment function. If they work as a Teaching Assistant or Graduate Assistant, we can give them a scholarship equivalent related to their employment vs. their family status.
  - Our current policy offers graduate and undergraduate degrees both and that is not allowed under the IRS code.
  - Dr. Payne said with the dependent scholarship that she signs off on, many are taking for continuing education, and they aren't seeking a degree, they are just taking courses. Will this allow for that? President said if it's an undergraduate degree, they must be degree seeking. If they want to take courses, they can just audit them and they pay the approved audit fee.
  - Irrespective of marital status, there is no limit on the number of dependents that can take advantage of the scholarship discount. The university still benefits. There is no limit to the number of hours per semester or the number of dependents that can take advantage. They may have 2, 5 or 20 dependents taking classes at the same time.
  - The age limit (24) is another IRS code requirement.
  - There is a total hour cap: the lesser of degree completion or 150 hours.
  - Both policies have the same repayment or full payment requirement if the class is not successfully completed, which include withdraws and F's.
  - How much would a dependent cost under this plan? What would it cost for a dependent that takes a 3-hour class? President said that it is dependent on enrollment. The institution's lost revenue would be about \$600 (designated tuition). The cost for the dependent would be roughly \$1,200 per class plus whatever fees associated with the class.
  - Dr. Payne: currently, the dependent signed up for a class and the class doesn't make. If they are paying more and the discount isn't that much, can we now shift so that it helps? President asked how she keeps track of this information. Dr. Payne said that the Registrar keeps track of this. President said that we will eliminate that.
  - Undergraduate class requires 10 students for the class to make. If there are less than that then the deans need to decide if the class moves forward. The deans then get the requests for a scholarship. The registrar sends the forms back asking them to certify that they class will make, which allows them to use the employee scholarship. The deans say, "Yes."
  - Many years ago, there was a big push for community members and alumni to sign up for summer classes so they would make, and they would not pay or attend the class.
  - There are several statutory programs that allow senior citizens and alumni to take classes at a discounted rate. None of those should ever count towards whether a class should make. Internally defined scholarships programs, including this one, should not affect.
  - Bernie said: Aren't summer classes prorated? It shouldn't matter. Dr. Warnock said that summer classes used to not be prorated. For instance, if he is taking an undergraduate class

- and there are only 5 students, he only gets half, or \$2,100. Back then there was a big push to make sure the class made so that faculty would receive their complete salary.
- We should advocate and communicate to the registrar that it does not matter how many students are in the class. The faculty/staff/dependent scholarship should be applied. If we decide that the class does not move forward, then everyone gets dropped.
  - One problem is a class of 10 and 8 are dependents, the 8 dependents are attending for free, and the university is losing money. We won't be losing money with the new policy.
  - We need to have a Continuing Ed policy.
  - Most significant change is that it eliminates the free pass. There is no longer a free lunch. There is a very small cost associated for faculty and staff or employees and there is a larger cost participation for dependents. We are allowing more dependents and more hours. They may take 12 hours or 15 hours for less cost.
  - We may encourage more employees' children to stay here for their degrees.
  - There was a concern earlier about degree seeking, it would affect outcomes. Outcomes are only measured for FTICs. It may affect SACS measurement purposes for an individual program. Our state requirements are that everyone has to have a declared major.
- Fall 2025-potential of enrolling in the EdD program. We can't afford a cohort of EdD students that are 100% employees, and they attend for free. The whole point of the program is to have a revenue-generating program for the institution.
  - We will have a follow-up conversation on these policies at our next EC meeting. Karlin will continue to review them. President is waiting to receive references to some forms that need to be completed. Sam Houston is providing their rebuilt forms that are ready to go so that we can modify them to fit our needs.

### **Budget Update**

- Working on salary increases-bringing up the lowest paid employees to \$15 per hour. We can't afford to do this in one year, so it is proposed for over a 3-year period.
  - Affects 12 positions.
  - Currently at \$9.63. First year would be \$11.42; second year \$13.21 and \$15.00 on the last year.
- Next group also increases gradually from those that earn \$22,679 through \$36,820.
- After \$37,000 and above, we proposed a certain percentage. We are still working out what percentage would work out with the budget.
- The Dept. of Labor changes affect 42 employees. If we try to do all of the exempt and keep the new Dept. of Labor, it is over \$1 million. We are having to move a portion of those to non-exempt.
  - In July of this year, the big part in January, \$351,000 to increase that.
- With all the changes including the faculty plan, with a percentage of those faculty not included in the plan, it is about \$752,000 for Alpine, \$92,000 for RGC.
- Bonnie will be speaking to the Staff Council on Wednesday about the salary proposals.
- The Dept. of Labor changed the salary to \$58,656. There is a first step threshold effective July 1. The \$58,565 is the final step effective January 1, 2025.
- We will need to figure out who will need to complete time sheets and who will not. Bonnie Albright said there is a proposal. Karlin is scheduling meetings with those affected, and seeing who we need to move to non-exempt.
- President said that there are a lot of coordinator positions, administrative support personnel that will go from being exempt to non-exempt.

- Currently, the Deans' administrative assistants do not fill out time sheets and don't accrue comp time. They may have to. The difference is if you are exempt, you don't fill out a time sheet and you are not eligible for comp time. Many of these positions are accruing comp time. It is up to the management's discretion if you allow them to accrue comp time. It is not compensable at any time.
- The rules on comp time:
  - For non-exempt, they accrue the time and must use it within the same year of the date of accrual or it must be paid out.
  - For exempt personnel, they either use it within the 12-month period or they lose it. There is no payment to them because they are not eligible for overtime ever.
- There will be a lot of coordinators and admins that will be going from exempt to non-exempt.
- Employees paid \$42,000 are still exempt employees.
- Those individuals that do remain exempt and get a substantial pay increase will be ineligible for any other increases as part of the salary proposals. They are receiving a disproportionate reward that is being imposed on us by the federal government.
- We are still deciding whether it will be a 2% or 3% merit pool for the remainder of the participants.
- 12 positions affected by the \$15 increase.
- 89 positions are in the other group. Roughly 100 people will receive a cost-of-living adjustment for a much higher hourly rate than they currently have. They will be receiving about a 10% increase.
- There is a related impact that we will try to match. This will not satisfy all the challenges that we are facing. Minimum wage for student employment will track with the lower group. Students will go from what they are making now to \$11, then \$13 and eventually to the \$15 an hour. This will affect budgets. A student worker may not be able to work as many hours. This will be for work study and institutional. This will be the new minimum wage. They can work less hours or work the same hours but be supplemented by institutional funds.
- Dr. Cantens asked if it was up to us to raise the salary of an exempt employee to the new rate or keep their salary the same and make them non-exempt. President said that it is up to us to decide if they remain exempt or move them to non-exempt status.
- The exempt status is clearly defined in the federal code. A lot of these positions don't rise to the definition because they require supervisory responsibility on the part of the individual and independent decision making. Intended to be for Assistant Directors and above.
- Bonnie mentioned they looked at job descriptions. They work so much overtime so that was another consideration.
- There will be individual decisions, they will not make them wholesale. Most are focused on the administrative positions and coordinator positions.
- Bonnie and Karlin are meeting with the affected employees. The changes are effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, but we have until the 15<sup>th</sup> to make the changes happen because it doesn't affect their pay until August.

### **Student Health Insurance Update**

- Bonnie and Ben met with the group yesterday. Going live July 15. International students will see it automatically on their student bill. If they have another insurance, they will be able to ask for a waiver.
- It is an optional insurance for the other students. They will be able to opt out.
- The coverage will start on August 1 since the athletes are coming on August 3.

### **IT Shared Services**

- Bonnie Albright mentioned that they are engaging Samir to work on the SaaS project.
- Sharing the ISO with Lamar state colleges
- April is working on a new required position: DMO-Data Management Officer. She will lead that to still share with the Lamar colleges. This individual would be employed by Sul Ross but shared.
- Bonnie will put an implementation team together for each department assigning someone to work with regarding the SaaS project.

### **Police Department**

- We will have a full department. Please make sure that you are vigilant and lock your doors. Two new officers begin on Monday.
- The other two new hires will begin on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Sully Showcase**

- June 21<sup>st</sup> -We need to be there to represent.
- Follette will open the week before so they can have the store open for everyone to shop.
- August 23<sup>rd</sup>

### **Phone**

- The phone tree was changed out and Ben asked if anyone has encountered any issues, to please let him know. It seems to be working better.
- Some complaints that calls are being routed to places that they didn't call. Please put in a ticket and do not just notify us. We need to correct the issues.
- President asked if the After 5:00 o'clock messaging is going out. He asked Ben to follow up with Jacob. The message should say something like, "You have reached us after business hours, please call back during this time. If this is an emergency, please hang up and dial 911."

### **MOU for Excelencia**

- MOU is for us to be a mentor institution. As we pursued the Seal of Excelencia, one element was the award to open doors for us. Excelencia doesn't have a rubric to measure the effectiveness of the institution. However, they like what they see.
- When in Denver, the team of Natalie, April, Kayla, Suzanne and Ben, it was an eye-opening experience. Also, part of what they were doing there was politicking for our position as a small rural area institution.
- They liked our institution that they invited the president to be a part of this pilot program. Only invited 8 institutions from around the nation and SRSU was one of them.
- Normally it is Seal-certified institutions that mentor other institutions that are pursuing the seal. However, we have not received our seal yet, as we applied just this year. This bodes well for us as an institution.
- The group that was doing the HSI Faculty initiative will continue and get some of those folks into this because it is a three-year commitment. Tied to data.

### **Pool Update**

- Workers are there now. May take pictures and put them on social media.
- Dr. Cantens asked if there was a time limit and Ben said that there was none.
- The water issues will affect the time in how quickly we are able to fill it.

- Work in progress, but it is good progress.

### **Housing update for Faculty/Staff**

- Ben would like to know if there are new faculty or staff that will be hired and will need housing, please let them know as soon as possible. We don't want someone trying to move here in August and not having a place to live.
- Housing costs-we are making sure to capture appropriate fees.

### **Updates from Dr. Bernie Canteñs**

- Two Registrar candidates will be interviewed next Tuesday.
  - One is from Odessa and the other candidate is from Texarkana
- Sally is doing an amazing job with the hiring process. They hired a new English professor and are in negotiations with the psychology hire.
  - President asked if the psychology position was a temporary position. Dr. Cantens said it was a tenured position.
  - Sally is taking the lead on the hiring for the math and CJ positions.
  - The enrollment report that came out today says that RGC Fall is up 6%, Summer is up 4% and the master's program is up 30%. Historical enrollment data shows a decline at RGC. The fall is from settled, but it is a positive indication.
  - Thursday there will be a meeting with faculty on how to repurpose the programs there. What to include and what not to include.
- Dean of Business start date has changed. His new start date is July 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- We are consolidating the business programs in Eagle Pass and Alpine.
  - Faculty here have questions in writing. Will have one meeting next Wednesday.
  - This is like what we did in education. In education, by necessity, we combined the program over a single being with the Dean in Alpine and a Chair in Eagle Pass. We will have the reverse model in Business in Eagle Pass and have a chair in Alpine and a Dean in RGC.
  - All will be under a single umbrella in leadership model to develop and discuss more specialized curricula and degree offerings, in the near future so that we have more specialization.
  - When Dr. Payne goes to the website for RGC, it says RGC College of Business. Do we call it Eagle Pass campus. It needs to be clear messaging.
  - April mentioned that she called them sites: Del Rio Site, Uvalde Site, Eagle Pass Site when she was writing the information for SACS.

### **Updates from April Aultman Becker**

- April working on SACS recommendation, looking at each program with a rubric
- Dr. Hernandez asked April if it was what we delivered or what faculty had written about their programs. April said that it is both.
- We found that our current system, Nuventive, does not really produce or print out information in some cases.
- Good news-with Title V, we will be getting a new system called Watermark for the fall. This will be part of the response mentioning that we will be moving away from an ineffective system.
- April will be contacting faculty members to go over their previous reports and work through the reports that were due May 31st.

- Dr. Warnock asked April if she is able to provide them with a report on the faculty that completed their reports. Once she receives the report from April, she can move forward with paying faculty stipends. They receive their stipends based on their job performance.
- The BS in English, BS in Education and the BS Geology and were commended as exemplary reports.
- Working on academic assessments and rehauling administrative assessments.
- Lots of reporting on IR

### **Updates from Dr. Laura Payne**

- Dr. Downing awarded a full Fulbright scholarship so he will be off to Croatia next year. Met with Alicia Trotman and are confident they can move forward with the department.
- Savannah Williamson has resigned and moving to Georgia. She met with Matthew and Kendra and they are confident they can re-arrange her classes and manage with adjuncts.
- Will need to run a search for a history faculty member
- Jay Downing will come back for work after his trip

### **Updates from Michelle Lancaster**

- The first 5 embedded associates degrees were filed with the THECB and will be considered administratively complete to the 30-day notice period. During the 30- day period, there is an opportunity for institutions within 50 miles to comment, which we have none. The THECB should have an exception for us since we have not institutions within the 50 miles.
- The other 5 embedded associates degrees will go before the Board of Regents in August.
- Opened 23 new cases for promotion, tenure and 3<sup>rd</sup> year review for 2024-2025.
- Began preparing for the CIP code project: April, Pam and Michelle.
- Signed transfer articulation with Lamar. Approached by Austin Community College for a similar agreement.
- Follett will be here the 21<sup>st</sup> on June and will be open for Sully Showcase on that day.
  - Big grand opening party is set for 23<sup>rd</sup> of August for Sully Showcase and move in day-30% coupons for everyone
  - They can also present during the showcases at the Gallego Center.
  - Currently gathering adoptions for fall and June 25 is the first faculty online training.
- Dr. Cantens mentioned that they are planning a trip to Lamar regarding an MOU. Bonnie Warnock, Eric Busby and he will be going. Dr. Hernandez would like to attend if his schedule allows.
  - They are trying to kick off the collaboration. We take 100% of their classes for BS in Leadership or BS in Ag Industry. There is discussion and excitement for the BS in Industrial Technology moving to where we have some space at those campuses. We would be able to hire faculty there to teach SRSU classes, such as upper-level welding classes on their campus. The student will be getting a Sul Ross degree.
  - Lamar Institute of Technology, Lamar Orange and Lamar are on board. Lamar Port Arther has not signed. We need a separate articulation agreement for each campus.
  - Dr. Funasaki asked if we will be entering into any nursing articulations? President sent that we have forwarded our RN to BSN information to them. LVN designation is going to the wayside. They would need to go into a prelicensure program like a BSN.
- President asked Michelle a follow-up question regarding Follett. He asked if she had begun working with Jacob and Bursar to program the assessment and the opt-out info. Michelle said yes, it is in progress.



- He mentioned that we need to begin the messaging for returning students that this is a change and that they will need to opt-out of the program, if they want to. Michelle said she and Betse have had meetings regarding messaging.

#### **Updates from Dr. Bonnie Warnock**

- Faculty/staff updates
  - Jeff Keeling, a lecturer, has left and they were able to get his job posting up.
  - They are trying to get more lecturers because there is no way the two faculty members they currently have can handle the course loads.
  - Trying to hire visiting faculty for the botany position.
- West TX Water Center-moving with that incorporating the Rio Grande Research Center.
- The College National Finals Rodeo started on Sunday. Chisum Allen is competing there. Each athlete competes in three rounds. Top scores from the three rounds go to the championship round. Chisum had a no time on the 1<sup>st</sup> round, and is 4<sup>th</sup> in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round
  - His next event is Friday
  - CJ is the arena director and has been there for over a week. He is in charge of making sure the arena is set up.
  - He was also selected as our region's faculty director-elected by students to be their voice. He mediates disputes and speaks to the commissioner on their behalf. Recognized by his peers.

#### **Updates from Dr. Eric Funasaki**

- Working on SSS renewal. It may need to change with the Department of Labor changes to the \$58,000. President said that this is the conversation they are having regarding the exempt and non-exempt changes.
  - President mentioned that most grant proposals include merit increases annually built into their salary. Dr. Funasaki said it is a 2% increase. Since we haven't had an increase in years, we won't use that.
  - Currently, the project managers make \$54,000 and they will need to have the salary increases too. We may need to work with the granting agency to re-budget their portion of other costs into compensation to cover this because of the federal government requirement.
  - Bonnie said they have all grant positions on the list.
  - The first part is a small increase.
  - The second step of the Depart of Labor increases is big, which should include grant project managers.
- Huge Nursing opportunity grant of \$1 million a year for 4 years. It has not been released yet, but they are waiting. It will be due 30 days after it is released.
- President asked when we should hear back on the Title V grants. Dr. Funasaki said in August or early September because the grants begin on October 1.

#### **Updates from Dr. Suzanne Harris**

- A testament to Student Life as a whole and their relationship with Athletics: Dean referrals. Dean referrals are elevated to the level for her review.
- Dr. Harris pulled data for the last five years. This is her first full year as Dean of Students.
  - 5 years ago, there were 110 dean referrals
  - 4 years ago, there were 83
  - 3 years ago, there were 60

- Last year there were 69
- Only 14 dean referrals for this year.

#### **Update from Janice Valenzuela**

- Approached by a community member regarding the handicap parking spots, or lack of spots at the Gallego center. Maybe we can designate spaces for events, but not permanently. None of the spaces in front are ADA compliant.
- We will need to publish that information in advance of the events. We can designate about 6 more spaces in the back of Gallego Center. And we can designate more of the parking area on the side during events.
- We will work to improve that experience going forward.

#### **One more update from Dr. Payne**

- She had a good meeting with Sam Houston's online education group that were on campus yesterday regarding the Ed.D.
- She wants to take a trip to Sam Houston, what they call Viva Huntvegas, to see the infrastructure of their online education Ed.D. and graduate programs.
- We met with them to make sure that we have our courses and course build ready for when we have our on-site visit.

**Adjourned: 11:47 a.m.**