

PIE Council  
Meeting Minutes - Feb. 28, 2025

Present: Brian Anderson (Chair), Aaron Brooks, Christi Dillon, Magan Evans, Carla Lowery, Clear Moore, Anika Perkins, Lee Anne Puckett, Jennifer Moore, Chanley Rainey, Stephanie Salvaterra, Jo Shumake, Barry Smith, Tracee Watkins, Shelby Wilson, and Laila Wrenn

Absent: Christy Dickerson, Marty Hatton, Jess Harpole, Penny Mansell, President Nora Miller

- I. Approved (Smith, Brooks) January minutes.
- II. MUW Enrollment Trends Heat Map Fall 2001 - 2024 (J. Moore)

A. Findings

J. Moore explained that the Total New Degree-Seeking column combines freshmen and new transfer students. This year looks a lot like last year, but transfer cohort declines from COVID are persisting longer than those for freshman. This is a concern esp. given our dependence on transfer students. We have not seen numbers this low since prior to the Tupelo nursing campus opening, which also coincided with the closure of the V3 online-enrollment system (which had a separate student admission and enrollment system that deflated our numbers). Our post-pandemic low point for freshmen was in 2022, but transfer numbers have gone down every year. These numbers will be updated, and official numbers will be submitted to IHL April 1.

B. Analysis/Outlook

Puckett is in Tupelo and reported strong recruitment efforts, with roughly 20 events already completed for the spring. Enrollment has declined since COVID alongside the decline in nurse staffing. Their numbers seem to be steady now, and they have started a part-time summer program last year that is getting a lot of interest.

C. Moore noted that the university joined the NASH Transfer Success Improvement Community this fall. Through the community, we are learning about making and testing small administrative and logistical changes to build recruitment and retention. An additional benefit is that the network has helped us connect with three community colleges in MS (Meridian, NE, and Gulf Coast) that are also participating. Through the network, we have reached an agreement with Meridian and NE to test earlier

recruitment efforts. Staff at those schools are testing out ways to distribute transfer interest forms, and we are testing out procedures for receiving and processing the forms. This is being piloted in the Culinary Arts program and, if successful there, can be implemented generally to help us identify and begin working with potential transfer students earlier.

C. Moore also noted that we previously had a staff person focused on community college engagement, but that was grant-funded and went away. Now, we have a new position that was written to refocus on community colleges. Hope McDonald is only a couple of months into the job but has already been visiting community colleges. Anderson suggested that chairs do not know we've been doing this outreach work again and encouraged C. Moore to have McDonald attend Council of Chairs and/or other upcoming meetings to spread awareness.

### III. Fall 2024 Profile & Comparison with 2023 (J. Moore)

- Fall 2024 versus 2023, we were slightly down for headcount (-1.5%) but slightly up (0.5%) for FTE.

A major driver is our loss of dual enrollment students from Starkville Academy. We had been offering their students 2-3 course options, but Mississippi College offered them a bigger package of courses and replaced us. Those students--38 in 2023--are all part-time, so that hurt our headcount but not our full-time enrollment.

- Dorm enrollment is down more (-5.9%) than commuter (-0.5%).
- Retention for freshmen dropped below 70% to 67%, and we never like to see it go below 70%.
- Retention/graduation rates for transfer students also declined, but only slightly (<1%), and the drop was mainly in the number graduating within one year. Retention actually went up slightly.
- Overall graduation rates were down nearly 9%.

This reflected declines among both BA and MA graduation rates; we had growth in ASN and DNP rates. This is the cumulative effect of smaller enrollment numbers from 2021-2022.

- Student to faculty ratio remained steady at 10:1.

#### IV. Faculty/Staff Satisfaction Surveys (J. Moore)

##### A. Response Rates

We used Watermark to survey everyone last year, and the response rate was in the 20s for both faculty and staff. This year, we moved back to a platform that allows us to embed the survey in Canvas, which means that we can more forcefully remind people to take the survey.

The change in survey delivery was effective in raising the faculty response rate to 78%, but the rate for staff remained very low, at 29% (up from 23% last year).

Discussed ways to improve staff response rates. The reliance on digital survey invitations was identified as a possible barrier, given that many staff work in positions that do not require them to regularly check email and that do not provide them with access to an office computer while at work. Smith suggested the use of QR codes to enable hard copy invitations to the digital survey. This would allow us to send invitations to staff via physical mail, and then staff could use the QR codes to take the survey on smart phones.

##### B. Positive Results

In general, upwards of 75% of faculty and staff agree or strongly agree that the university is a good place to work with good procedures in place.

Growth in positivity was notable when it came to the adequacy of physical facilities, with faculty satisfaction improving slightly and staff satisfaction jumping from 46-65%.

##### C. Negative Feedback - Faculty Highlights

1. Budget (2 questions)
2. Faculty Salary Levels (mirrors results on Staff survey)
3. Incentives to Improve Level of Education and Training (slight improvement from 2023)
4. Supervisors receiving annual evaluation from those they supervise (slightly up from 2023)

##### D. Negative Feedback - Staff Highlights

1. Drop from 70-64% in agreement that MUW uses well-defined process to establish, evaluate, and change university goals.
2. Qs 2.10 and 2.11, both dealing with budget prep & implementation, saw agreement increase to 65-66% from 54% last year

3. Q2.12 saw slight increase (27-30%) in agreement that staff salaries are based on education, skills, knowledge and experience
4. Q2.13: only 17% agree staff salary levels are adequate, slightly up from 11% last year.
5. Q2.14: slight increase (31-33%) in agreement that staff are rewarded for increasing their levels of education and training
6. Q2.17: as with faculty, we see few supervisors saying that they receive feedback from those they oversee, but this could be because many staff do not supervise anyone (and the same is likely true for faculty).
7. Q2.24: Only 58% agreed that The W provides support for the writing, submission, and reporting of grants.
8. Q2.45: Only 67% agreed that they were aware of the QEP - many said this was not applicable to them - this is a new question that was added.

#### E. Discussion

Smith noted the poor evals for budget processes and suggested that there is room for PIE to better educate campus about the budget planning process. Anderson agreed that we could better inform campus about the importance of thinking about budgeting outside of the budget proposal process, which only occurs over a few weeks.

#### V. PIE Membership Changes

SGA elections will take place in the second week of April, and Anderson asked Wrenn to share news of new officers with Faculty Senate so that he knows who the new SGA representatives will be and so that faculty can share the news.

Faculty Senate and Staff Council will choose new officers at the end of the academic year, and Anderson asked Christy Dillon and Chanley Rainey to put him in touch with their replacements on Staff Council and Faculty Senate, respectively.