

## Board of Trustees Emergency Meeting

Thursday, March 19, 2020

6:15 – 7:15 p.m. (or until business concludes)

DeBoer Room, Hannon Library

### MINUTES

#### Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum

Board Members:

Lyn Hennion	Present	Deborah Rosenberg	Present
Les AuCoin	Present	Daniel Santos	Present
Jonathon Bullock	Present	Linda Schott (ex officio)	Present
Sheila Clough	Present	Barry Thalden	Present
Shaun Franks	Present	Bill Thorndike	Present
Megan Davis Lightman	Present	Steve Vincent	Present
Dylann Loverro	Present	janelle wilson	Present
Paul Nicholson	Present		

Chair Lyn Hennion called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. in the DeBoer Room of the Hannon Library. The Board Secretary recorded the roll and a quorum was verified.

Other attendees included: Greg Perkinson, Vice President for Finance and Administration; Dr. Susan Walsh, Provost; Dr. Neil Woolf, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs; Janet Fratella, Vice President for University Advancement; Jason Catz, General Counsel; Sabrina Prud'homme, Board Secretary; Britney Sharp, ASSOU; Taylor Burke, Dean of Students; Dr. Matt Stillman, Registrar; Hugues Lecomte, Campus Recreation; Josh Lovern, Budget Office; and Kathy Park, Office of the Board Secretary.

#### Public Comment

Echo Fields submitted a written statement, which was provided to the trustees. Sabrina Prud'homme read a portion of the statement where Ms. Fields encouraged trustees to work with the state legislature and members of Congress to obtain a deferment of student loan debt repayments. Ms. Fields described that SOU students are more likely to come from lower income families and to have taken on debts that they struggle to pay in the best of times.

#### Action, Information and Discussion Items

##### Adjustment [Reduction] to Student Fees for the Spring 2020 Term (Action)

President Linda Schott said the emergency meeting was necessary to discuss student fees as SOU moves to a quarter where everything will be remotely delivered. Normally students are charged a range of fees for services they can access, such as the recreation center, Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) and Student Life activities. The administration believes the vast majority of students will leave campus, which is in the best interest of public and student health. The administration is hoping to be able to rework the fee structure to relieve students of some of the fees or provide more transparency around the fees that would be charged. The goal would be to provide relief to students and families, then ensure adequate revenue to continue to support services so

they will be available when students return. President Schott stressed that where the senior leadership ended is not where she wanted to end and recognized she, others and the board will be criticized for whatever decision is made.

Dr. Neil Woolf said the administration wants to provide more certainty to students. In looking at what SOU can charge, they want to do what is best and most fair for students, and SOU's current obligations.

Josh Lovern said the four fees involved are the student incidental fee, recreation center fee, SHWC fee and building fee. These are \$658 per term. The team also looked at tuition rates, including graduate, undergraduate and WUE, to determine the right mix.

Dr. Woolf mentioned that OSU announced it was not adjusting its tuition and fees for the spring term, which was not well-received. President Schott added that students may perceive the spring term as having fewer benefits for them but SOU informed students that some of the benefits will continue to be provided.

Responding to Trustee Steve Vincent's inquiry, Jason Catz said the university hopes for relief measures from the governor's office and the legislature but the bandwidth to get in front of the governor on the issue of student fees is not high.

Mr. Catz said there are statutes that govern the very fees the board has adopted year over year. The board does not have the legal authority to create new fees or just simply wipe out certain fees and charge a new fee without going through the tuition and fee process. The board can make adjustments to existing fees but the impact on the next term is unknown, as is SOU's ability to meet its contractual commitments.

President Schott and Greg Perkinson added the universities are approaching this issue differently and are unable to establish general principles for a common approach.

Responding to Trustee Dylann Loverro's inquiry, Mr. Lovern said the online delivery fee is applied to the technology framework that allows SOU to offer courses online and reducing that \$65 fee has been discussed.

Mr. Lovern explained that WUE students taking online courses are paying the in-state tuition rate. If WUE students were charged the online tuition rate instead, there would be a significant drop in revenue, probably in excess of \$700,000 on top of attrition.

Trustee Deborah Rosenberg expressed her concern with charging students fees but not giving them the same educational experience, making enough revenue for SOU to keep its doors open, and the endless tension of giving students a financial break.

Responding to ASSOU President Britney Sharp's inquiry regarding using a student referendum to change the fees, Mr. Catz said there would be challenges. For example, it would be difficult to get the bills out to students on time and facilitate the charge in the financial aid disbursement process. Also, the process would take weeks to have an effective referendum. Any referendum could not just remove the fees but would have to satisfy financial obligations (e.g., the recreation center bonds) and ensure services can still

be provided. If SOU dropped many of its services and the people associated with delivering them, it would be difficult if not impossible to resume services when needed.

Mr. Lovern summarized the proposal: leave the fees as is then create a mechanism to return to the students during the term a rebate/credit for some lost value. Dr. Woolf clarified that the students' bills would remain the same for now; after operational savings have been determined, a message would be sent to students to inform them they would get some money back.

Trustees Rosenberg and Loverro expressed concern with doing business as usual, thinking it would be giving no credence to this situation and students need assistance right now. Trustee Loverro recommended reducing the fees a certain amount now and then more later. Trustee Vincent recommended including any reduction as a credit on students' statements, rather than as a general adjustment.

President Schott stressed the board's and her highest responsibility is to ensure the continuity of the institution. Although serving students is primary, if SOU is not here it cannot serve students. SOU has to balance what it does to help students and families without undermining SOU's stability of operations. She cautioned that if the HECC thinks SOU has acted irresponsibly, it may be reluctant to provide emergency support.

Trustee janelle wilson concurred with the president's comment about the continuity of the institution being of utmost importance. Discussion ensued on the consequences of delaying notification to students until a decision is made and the impact on financial aid, students' ability to pay bills, and students keeping their campus employment.

Trustee Barry Thalden proposed a combination of reducing the fees and asking the state for additional support. Trustee Daniel Santos said SOU needs surety for the vitality and security of the institution itself.

Trustee Jon Bullock said this is a three-prong issue: economic, timing, and relations with students and families. SOU is not yet solid on the economics and students' bills have already gone out. He, therefore, thought SOU should focus on the relationships.

Discussion ensued on possible rate reductions now and later; the impact on planned budget cuts and the reserves; the importance of keeping faith with students; the impact on student retention; the impact on students who depend on financial aid and funding for employment; the possibility of using fundraising efforts to help cover the shortfall; and the importance of preserving reserves for a rainy day, which is now.

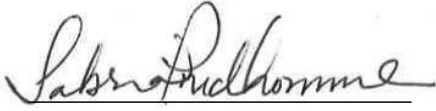
Trustee Bullock moved that the board empower the administration to make a reduction [in the form of a remission or credit] to student fees now and reduce fees later, upon further analysis. Trustee Thorndike seconded the motion. After discussion on the possible amount of reduction, the motion passed unanimously, with Trustee Santos abstaining.

## **Adjournment**

Chair Hennion adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Date: April 21, 2020

Respectfully submitted by,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sabrina Prud'homme". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Sabrina Prud'homme  
University Board Secretary