



Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium

Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Executive Committee Telephone Conference

July 17, 2012 – 2:00pm

MINUTES

Board of Directors present: President Moulton, Chair (USA), Dr. Jack Hawkins (TU), Dr. William Cale (UNA) Dr. Jay Gogue (AU), Dr. Joe Benson (UA) DISL Attendees: Dr. John Valentine, Dr. John Dindo, David England, Lori Pritchett (recording)

After operator roll call, President Moulton called the meeting to order and introduced Dr. Joe Benson, representing the University of Alabama.

Mr. Moulton called the board's attention to the first agenda item; approval of the October 3, 2011 minutes. Mr. Moulton asked if there were any corrections before approval, after it was determined that none were needed, Dr. Jay Gogue (AUB) moved to approve, 2nd by Dr. Jack Hawkins (Troy).

Mr. Moulton moved to the second agenda item, the restructuring of the DISL Organizational Chart explaining the following revisions; Regeneration of the Coastal Policy Program, the Public Relations Department's move to the Executive Directors Office. The DISLF's move to The Director for Institutional Advancement, Housekeeping's move to Plant Operations and the Estuarium's Information Content's move to the direction of Outreach and Education. Dr. Jay Gogue (AU) moved to approve, Dr. Jack Hawkins (Troy) 2nd. Item approved.

Dr. Valentine continued to the 3rd agenda item, the approval of the proposed FY2013 budget (attachment 4c). He explained, that the 2% cut in state appropriations is consistent with reductions in state funding received for the past few years and has led to a conservative approach to spending, compensating for decreased funding. The significant reduction in restricted funds is the direct result of the significant infusion of unsolicited research funds into the MESL from the BP block grant which is nearing its completion. At this moment there are no new substantial sources of similar funds hence the reduction, he went on to say that to some extent this reduction has been offset by important increases in tuition. Positive budget highlights include two fee adjustments; entrance fee for the public aquarium, and a fuel charge driven change to small boat fees. Importantly, continuing to increase reserves.

Dr. Moulton opened the floor to questions and invited Dr. Valentine to explain to the board justification for proposed across the board employee increases. Dr. Valentine noted that DISL had generated an operating surplus allowing a 3% increase which would come out of the contingency fund. Mr. Moulton asked Dr. Valentine to clarify that the salary increases would not deplete the contingency fund, but that operating surplus funds would continue to rollover into the fund. Dr. Gogue asked if the increases were based on merit to which Dr. Valentine replied that the increase was considered cost of living and that without the increase, the employees would have to absorb an increase in PEEHIP cost being moved to employees. Dr. Jay Gogue (AU) moved to approve the submitted budget, Dr. Jack Hawkins (Troy) 2nd. Item approved.

In the director's report, Dr. Valentine mentioned that the state audit did not include any significant findings, a report that will be published online towards the end of this month or first of next month he added, importantly this is the second year in a row in which lab received a clear report.

Dr. Valentine continued with the graphical presentation, the historical subscription trends for summer courses. He stated, the important message is that undergraduate and graduate demand for our courses remain strong and have increased while the larger schools in the MESC take more of the course work, students from throughout the consortium are enrolling in our summer program including 16 of our 22 member schools.

Other figures in the attachments showed the DISL K 12 program, Discovery Hall, are similarly well subscribed to. Dr. Valentine commented that these two pieces of information explain the noticeable increase in our revenue from tuition which he believed would continue into the coming year.

An external review of facilities safety, campus safety and employee policies by Dr. John Smith's, student services staff at USA found only minor concerns but did make some insightful recommendations which have been adopted. All requested changes have been completed, and policy and campus security recommendations are being implemented.

Dr. Valentine proceeded to update the group on the nearly completed BP Block grant to support basic research on the oil spill by explaining the slides provided to illustrate fund distribution, publications and research by participating scientists at member institutions. Dr. Valentine called the groups attention the 2011 annual report which illustrates the diversity of activities conducted year round on the campus.

Finally, Dr. Valentine announced his intention for the MESC to compete for Alabama's restore act funded center for excellence and sited the act : "priority will be given to entities and consortia (including public and private institutions of higher education) that demonstrate the ability to establish the broadest cross section of participants with interest and expertise in any discipline on which the proposal of the center of excellence will be focused commenting that it sounded like it was written for the MESC. He continued by indicating that out of the 5 required themes to be emphasized in the gulf, the MESC is strong in 4. He also mentioned that in conversations with Alan Hanson and Jeff Wood during trips to Washington last year indicated that both Senators Shelby and Session thought we were the correct location for the state's center. He added that, the money should be spent in the coastal zones as defined by our states coastal management plan. The last attachment he explained is a published OP ED article by Retired DISL Director, George Crozier and himself.

In conclusion, Dr. Valentine added a number of new projects as "New Business" in the agenda which include plans for an updated DISL website, and the DISLF and DHP successful bid for funding through the Moorer Foundation to construct a "state of the art" classroom for the K-12 program, construction to begin in the fall. A new display will come online in the fall, a 7000 gal "Rays of the Bay" to be included in the Estuarium experience. We will be meeting to target projects within the budget per RFP from the National Science Foundation for marine lab improvements. This fall DISL conduct our first strategic plan effort and will bring in an outside firm to coordinate that effort.

Dr. Jack Hawkins, (Troy), commented on the published OP ED piece inquiring as to the cost of the additional new initiatives. Dr. Valentine responded that there was a number of revenue resources available within the settlement; a 35% share that will be divided equally among the states, a 30% share that will occur within the states, an additional 30% with the GOM task force, 5% set aside for science, 2.5% for the COE, 2.5% Fisheries Mgt. The discussion moved to the federal and state control of the money and Dr. Valentine's effort to secure the approval of the ten officials, (essentially Coastal Mayors), charged with determining the COE for Alabama along with the amount of the actual fine. Dr. Valentine asked the group for letters of support for the MESC as COE as he met with committee members. Mr. Moulton mentioned the need for meetings to flesh out opportunities for partnerships and coalitions from different institutions. Dr. Valentine clarified to the group his intentions to bid for the COE and scientific advisory for the additional items. No further comments were made.

Approved 7-15-13

Mr. Moulton then adjourned the meeting.