



**Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Executive Committee Annual Meeting
Minutes**

Tuesday, August 18, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Attendees:

Dr. John Stewart, University of Montevallo
Dr. Jack Hawkins, Troy University
Dr. Jay Gogue, Auburn University
Dr. Stuart Bell, University of Alabama
Dr. Tony Waldrop, University of South Alabama
Dr. John Valentine, Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
David England, Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Shelley Stephens, Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Steve Zip, Southland Energy

Absent:

- Roll call of conference call attendees.
- Meeting called to order by Dr. Waldrop, Chair of the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC) Executive Committee.
- Dr. Waldrop called to approve minutes from the 2019 MESC Executive Committee conference call on August 29, 2019. Motion made by Dr. Stuart Bell to approve the minutes; motion seconded by Dr. Jay Gogue. Motion to approve minutes carried by unanimous vote of committee members present.
- **Fiscal Year 2021 Budget (Document A) –**
 - Total revenues, despite conservative projects, are expected to reach \$21 Million.
 - We anticipate continued COVID-driven losses in both University Programs and Discovery Hall Programs (K-12) based on this year's events.
 - To compensate for these losses, we will be freezing hiring and nonessential expenses.
 - Anticipated losses are set at \$1.2 Million
 - DISL State Appropriation remained level at \$5 Million
 - We received an additional \$1 Million supplement to the appropriation that is targeted for adding significant capacity to our experimental wet lab facilities.
 - We have a contingency set at 5% of our budget; therefore we are not requesting approval for employee raises this year.

Motion to accept the FY2020 MESC budget made by Dr. Jack Hawkins; seconded by Dr. Jay Gogue

- **Southland Energy ESCO Presentation**

- Dr. Valentine reminded the Executive Committee of the history behind the DISL's campus construction and the need for infrastructure upgrades.
- Dr. Valentine introduced Mr. Steve Zip of Southland Energy to describe the elements of the energy savings contract (ESCO).

Motion to grant Dr. Valentine the authority to enter into the ESCO with Southland Energy was made by Dr. Waldrop, seconded by Dr. Jack Hawkins. The motion carried unanimously, and a written ballot was received post-meeting from all Executive Committee Members.

- **State Audit Report**

- Document C is our annual state audit. As with past years, there were no findings reported. This is our 22nd consecutive year with a clean audit.

- **Summer School Performance Metrics**

- Dr. Valentine referred to the DISL Articles of Incorporation which directs DISL to reduce redundancy in Alabama higher education in terms of marine sciences.
- Documents D-H demonstrate DISL's commitment to this mission, despite the COVID situation.
- In Summer term 2020, students from 16 of the 23 member schools enrolled in this year's online efforts, which demonstrates interest in DISL programming remains high.
 - The credit hours dropped from 2019's historical high, but all things considered DISL did as well as we could in the situation.
 - Proportionally, the distribution of credit hours was about the same as in the past.
 - A noticeable absence is the UAB credit hours due to cancellation of the historic neurobiology course.
 - Document H represents graduate hours offered during the academic year.

- **Discovery Hall Programs (K-12) Metrics**

- Documents I-K provide important information on Discovery Hall Program's performance this fiscal year.
 - Documents I and J show the losses in DHP's four major summer programs.
 - Day camps and teacher workshops were effectively shut down due to COVID.
 - A limited number of overnight camps and the high school marine science course were offered, but as shown in Document K, there was a loss of \$43,000 this summer.

- **Campus renovation status -**

- Campus renovations have continued with DISL in-house craftsmen taking on projects that otherwise would not be possible had the campus been full.
- The pool and outdoor classroom mentioned during the 2019 meeting are on hold as fundraising has not been as successful as hoped – everything is going into COVID.
- We have submitted requests for CARES Act Funds to circumvent this shortcoming along with four separate stand-alone requests that include outdoor classroom, renovation of an aging house which can serve as an emergency quarantine house, and upgraded cafeteria ventilation. As of this meeting, we have gotten no response.

- **Facilities Master Plan**
 - The facilities master plan is moving along well. As a result of this plan, the campus will become greener and better organized.
- **USCG Property**
 - Key to determining what comes next on the master plan will be determined by the outcome of our 3-year effort to acquire the USCG property.
 - This is an ongoing effort that has been aided by staff in Senator Shelby's office.
- **MESC Outreach**
 - In terms of programmatic outreach we have continued an intense regional campaign on social media promoting live educational efforts both for K-12 children and interested citizens.
- **Infrastructure**
 - We have reopened the aquarium and implemented guidelines based on recommendations from the CDC and the Alabama Department of Public Health to provide guests and staff with a safe experience and workplace as a result of COVID.
 - The State of Alabama through Governor Ivey's office has awarded DISL \$3 million for the design and construction of a new research vessel. Since this was just announced, details are forthcoming.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Center for Excellence**
 - The Center of Excellence introductory workshop was held online June 24. It was well attended by MESC member institutions.
 - For background, the theme of the CoE will be on future multistressors.
 - The RFP is currently being developed for distribution to faculty of MESC member institutions.
- Dr. Tony Waldrop called for any additional comments or questions.
- Dr. Tony Waldrop called for a motion to adjourn the call; a motion was made by Dr. Jack Hawkins and seconded by Dr. Jay Gogue.
- The call was adjourned.