Alternative Service Committee  
Town Hall Meeting 11/14/13  
Hubbard Hall room 231  
Questions and Answers

Q – At the very beginning when you started your thing you said that we are not being forced into anything, but the whole purpose of this group is to come with an alternative to the state system and basically we are being told that we have to participate.

A – No, that is not true.

Q – No if we don’t participate, votes will be decided.

A – If you consider "a vote" participation then I guess yes you will be forced to do that one way or the other, either to vote if you want to be a part of it or don’t vote.

Q - We are being forced by the whole action of this committee by making a choice to either stay with the system or not.

A – It is not the action of this committee it is the state law that mandates a vote.

Q – Then why are we going through this whole process.

A – Because, if you take a look at the legislative action that has happened in the last year there is a law that is being drafted right now by the House Appropriation committee that will do away with the classified service in the state of Kansas. Here are the options: we can either take charge of our own future as far as our employment with the state goes and decide the way we want to go or we can let the legislature make that decision for us and take away the classified service and put us into unclassified service.

Q- If they do that how is it going to change from what you are trying to purpose?

A – We will not be classified if this change happens.

Q – And we are not classified if we go to the USS.

A – That is right, that is what I am trying to say. Is if we go to University Support Staff we are not classified.

Q – If the state decides to do away with classified then we become unclassified at the state level.

A – That is right; if we take an opportunity to vote and make this change if the state does away with classified and makes everyone unclassified it does not affect us if we are in the University Support Staff.

Q – That is my question what is the difference going to be by going to USS rather than being put in the unclassified by the state?

A – You will maintain most of your protections that you have right now except it won’t be at the state level.

Q – Again, if you go unclassified at the state level what is the differences between that and the USS that you purpose we go too?  
A – You know what the difference is between classified and unclassified is now?

Q – Semantics

A – No it is just semantics, Unclassified have a yearly contract and if you look at the state, the state will tell you that unclassified is an “at will” employee. Matt Johnston that all of us are an “at will” employee and technically that is correct, Kansas is a right to work state. The difference between classified and unclassified is that you have some civil service protection that makes it a little bit more difficult to fire you but it can happen. An unclassified employee can get to the end of their appointment notice and they can say that we are not going to renew you. They can’t do that with classified.

Q – What protects us after we switch over to the USS?
A – The policies that we put in place if it happens.

Q – The last time we talked and they don’t approve the policies then it is not fine.

A – If they don’t approve the policies then we would come back to everybody and ask what we want to do.

Q – Then we are just exercising ourselves that at this point?

A – Could be.

Before we move on did your questions get answered ok?

Q - Well, again what I am saying is that the information that you are passing out does not include all the possibilities that could be going on, correct?

A – We are not at the point where we can do that, that is why we are having these meetings.

Q – Just to clarify it, what we come up with, when we turn in to take a vote on it, what we actually take a vote on isn’t necessarily what we will be getting because there is no way to bind the university to give us that.

A – The only thing that we can do is rely on the good faith of the administration to do that. So my thought on this and this is my thought, I would much rather trust the local administration that sees what we do daily than to trust someone up in Topeka who has no clue who we are.

Q – Well, the unclassified has yearly contracts but they also have a more substantial benefit package, are we saying if or are we assuming if they move us to an unclassified system instead of going to the USS system some jobs would be eliminated?

A – That is a possibility because there is no guarantee because you would not fall under the statue that is being drafted.

Q – But isn’t it a possibility either way?

A – No, by law they cannot layoff anyone if we make the change to USS.

Q – But then after the change and the university down the road is strapped for money then what happens?

A – That can happen now, it can happen either way.

Q – So I am just saying that if the departments can’t be funded then it could happen.

Q – Will the switch to USS eliminate the appropriation that we get for the classified positions?

A – No it will not that will continue. I have already asked that question because it has come up several times. The money is allocated now and then it is placed into the WSU budget that money will continue to come in. The only thing that will happen if the move to USS is made, is if there is additional money for salary increases like the unclassified has had twice in the last 5 years we would get that as well. Where right not if there is money for salary increases as classified employees by law the university cannot give us that money.

Q – Can it also be noted that the bill that is currently being reviewed having being suspended was to phase out the classified staff and only for Technical IT’s, Lawyers etc…

A – If you read further into that if there are positions opened either by vacancies or new positions those positions get moved over to the unclassified service. It would start out in a phased approach with the IT positions, Lawyer position and the upper level positions and from that point if a job opened up it would be shifted to the unclassified service.

Q – I think that is also being challenged legally to not be legal.

A – There are all sorts of possibilities that could happen, we know that. The legislature could be voted out as a whole and everything could be new, but how realistic is some of that.
Q – To expand his questions, why are we looking at this, if that bill is not in place now?

A – Because some people are seeing the writing on the wall, if you look at the trend Midwest wide, this goes clear from Arizona up through the Midwest. State government is looking to minimizing their selves and in order to minimize their selves is to get rid of your staff and the easiest way to get rid of your staff is to get rid of the classified service so that you can then trim down things because there would be no civil service law protecting people that are in the unclassified service.

Q – Are you saying that is why we are trying to do this?

A – That would be my idea, if we are going to lose our civil service protection because they are going to get rid of the classified staff I would just as soon have a say in what happens that not.

Q – Here is one thing to look at if the university cuts one of our positions that money goes back to the state.

A – Matt Johnston – I think the best person to answer that would be Mary Herrin but my conversations with her the way that I understand it is no, when the university cuts a position say it is a vacant position and they decide not to refill that position those salary dollars stay within the university.

Q – So leaving the civil service is a big incentive there for the university because that is money in the universities pocket.

A – You are going to have to trust your local administrators to not do that, we have been told that is not going to happen. If you all want to believe that is going to happen because it could, it could very well happen now.

Q – Yes if the state all of a sudden says the workforce needs to cut I bet the state would take the money back.

A – Possibly, but that is hard to say, again we will go back to Esau’s argument on that, that could change, because legislature could change.

Q – Well there are 75 other bills in the appropriation committee, beyond that there is no proponent for that bill except for the person that introduced it and the people on that committee. So if you don’t have a much of proponents pushing for it and you already have your union there pushing against and saying that it is not something that we want to do.

A – We are going to go back a bit to the Unions stuff, This is a FYI the State of Kansas being a right to work state does not have to work with unions they do it only for courtesy.

Q – Where is that in writing?

A – Kansas is a right to work state.

Q – What union do we have?

A – We have the American Federacy of Teachers it used to be KAPE and the police dept. also has a union.

Q – These are probably uneducated questions – How many of the committee chair members are classified employees.

A – All the voting members are classified employees.

Good Glad to hear it.

Q – I have a question about the distribution of the extra money to go into raises, how would that be distributed? I was hired earlier in the year so if someone has been here longer than I, how would that be distributed? If raises are to be given I would like to make sure they are fair, if it is merit based then it is merit based, but if it isn’t I just want to make sure it is not done by who was hired first?

A – Well the merit based is going to be based on evaluations and our suggestion is that the portion of the raise that is merit based is based on satisfactory or better evaluation.

Q – My evaluation will happen earlier in the year than hers?
A – No, all evaluations Matt are due October 1st? Is that correct?

A – Matt – Unless she is referring to a probationary position.

A – If you have been here at least 6 months they are all due at the same time. Our recommendations is let’s say that there is a 3% raise that is granted from the university across the board everyone gets it. One percent is based on evaluation and if you received a satisfactory you will receive that 1%, not who is your best friend or who has been here longer. One of the proposals that we are looking at and this would happen after a vote would be taken is that KU has broad banded their salary raises a lot of this has to do with particularly with the trades but not necessarily. We were looking at this today, I had a visitor in my office and we talked about this. Let’s say KU has an electrician come in at $19/hr. and he is right out of school. The next electrician comes in and he is a licensed master electrician he can be hired in at a higher rate, even though he is a brand new electrician and so is this other guy right out of school. The same thing could happen with any of the other trades and with any of the classifications, if you have someone that is an administrative asst. and has 15 years of experience verses someone that comes right out of the tech school as an administrative asst. they can be hired at a higher level. Right now state law does not allow that, you are hired in at step 4 at whatever classification you are hired in at.

Q – KU has up to 10% upon approval of HR.

A – There will be some allowances for experience when you are hired if this change takes place.

Q - Can we go back to that banding of salaries through the current system?

A – Yes, that is what we would be looking at; right now I am going to go back to an example of an electrician again. Electrician 1 comes into WSU has a job description written by the state, an electrician comes into KDOT and has the same job description as the Electrician 1 at WSU or at K-State or anywhere else, the job is going to be different but his job description is exactly the same.

Q – So under the current civil service they are talking about banding salaries?

A – No, not under the current civil service we would be staying just like we are.

Q – Has that ever been an issue? Because I have heard a lot of talk about banding that over the past 10 years?

A – They have talked about the market studies and there has been some increases based on the market studies but I have not seen anything about where they were considering going to a banding type deal.

Q - I know that you talked about KPERS I just want to make sure that this doesn’t matter if you are vested with KPERS or not?

A – No, you will not lose your KPERS.

Q – On the same line as her question there was a new plan implemented that brought in the market study.

A – That market study has been thrown out.

Q – It has been completely quit and it just ended.

A – The last phase was not done, so it has been suspended.

Q – I have been here for a long time and we use to have the step system where every year you received a raise.

A – It is still in place if the legislature agrees to it.

Q – Are we talking about going back to a step type system, if you have been here longer you receive a bigger raise?

A – No, it is going to be based on your salary and whatever percentage the university agrees on. So you would get more if you are making more.

Q – So someone who has been in a position for 13 years someone coming off the street can make as much as me.
A – No not necessarily it will depend on how the salaries are banded. If you are in the middle of your band range then you would be making more money than someone coming in from the street to work here.

Q – Kind of like the step but not?

A – Yes, similar. If you want to take a look at the banding and the way that KU has done it, if you go to their website and then go to their HR dept. they have an entire spreadsheet that you can look at that shows the entire banding and it show the hiring ranges.

Q – The appropriations that we get from the state, you said that would not change, so if we are still getting the lump of our money from the state what information do we have too allow us to believe that if we go to alternative service that we would get a raise.

A – There is no guarantee, just like there is no guarantee that the unclassified is going to get a raise.

Q - There is no one already looking at that to see if the money is going to be there.

A – Mary Herrin’s office is looking at it to work it into the next year’s budget.

Q – If we are still getting the same lump of money from the state then I am having a problem with taking the leap of faith that anything will be there to allow raises.

A – We have a set amount of money that is given towards classified staff and that money is mandated that it go to the classified salaries.

Q – Mandated by the state or by the federal government.

A – It doesn’t matter it goes to the state to classified salaries, by state law the universities cannot give us any more money. If we go to the University Support Staff the university can then give us more money because we are no longer covered by the law that says the university cannot give you money.

Q – If they have an alternate funding source, but what I am saying is that there was an article in the Topeka journal saying that we might lose some of the applications from the federal government when we make the steps down from the civil service.

A – I have not seen that, email it to me.

Q - KU is just now going to the market study August of 2013 that just now saw their first paycheck from this, is this how long we are going to have to wait that long in order for this to go into place.

A – I hope not because KU went 6 years ago, our goal is to be completely done in 2–4 years.

Q – That is fine, but I am just saying that they voted yes and then they just got their first raise in 8 years?

A – They have had raises.

One way to look at it is we are not just voting yes for raises but we are also voting to have a market analysis, we would have to have one done because we understand that there are a lot of different classifications on campus that are paid below the market value. I am sure that HR understands as well, so that would have to be part of the process before any salary changes would be made.

Q – I was just wondering you said that salary increases would get appropriations from the state, if there would be increases like my salary in my dept. would that be based on each different department or college not on the university?

A – I would hope not because that is the one it is done by the unclassified staff now, money is given to each college now and then it trickles down to the employees. Our desire and our proposal is that everyone gets the same percentage for the first 2/3rds and then the last 1/3 would be based on your evaluation.

Q – I would like my raise before I retire, and I am real close to that!

Q – Why should a new employee get the same vacation of an employee that has been here 15 years, why wouldn’t a 15 year
employee make more?

A - My answer would be if this is something you feel is an issue that would happen to contact the compensation and pay committee or contact Wanda Holt.

A - Let me address that just a little bit if you are unclassified and you get hired today you start out at 6.77 hours per pay period. How long did it take you that are classified to get to that point?

Q – 15 years?

A - So they do it in 10 years now.

Q - It doesn’t quite seem fair the longer you work you should get more?

A – Again we would need to address that with Wanda and the compensation & pay committee about that.

Do we have any other questions before we start reading the written ones?

I know that it is 4:30 for some of you any of these questions we read after you leave will still me on the website.

Q – Will the university eventually try changing all the USS to unclassified professionals if the vote passes KU is doing this now?

A – That is not the intent of this university and yes KU is doing this now. KU is doing because of the market study they have been doing they are also doing it because the HR department doesn’t want to deal with more than one classification category not two, so based on the market study and the HR resources they are trying to get everyone to move to the unclassified status it is a voluntary move unless a position opens up, a person is promoted or demoted they are automatically moved to unclassified professional staff status. That is not the intent here and we are going to try and get that commitment from the university administration before we take the vote.

Q – Are they on yearly contract when they go to unclassified?

A – Yes they are!

Q – Do they get more retirement and better benefits and wouldn’t it cost a huge amount of money to write yearly contracts for all those employees?

A – Yes I would think that it would, but I don’t know. I don’t profess to know anything about finances.

Q – Why is the committee so lopsided?

A – I don’t know, there was a pool of employees that HR sent to and said if you are interested this is the number of hours we would need to commit or is necessary to commit too. If you are interested in sitting on it let us know. We have 15 people who are sitting on it that are classified voting members and we have 8 unclassified employees that are on the committee that are not voting members. The committee was formed it was out of our hands and we wondered why it was so lopsided and we are trying to fix that.

Q – When you have this all put together you keep saying if they approve it, if who approves it?

A – The administration.

Q - Who is on the administration?

A – We don’t know who is going to be on that yet, here is an example if we take the compensation and pay and look at the longevity pay right now if you were hired after 2008 you are not eligible for longevity pay. Those that were hired prior to that we get it and we get it at the rate of $40 per year of service it is capped at 25 years so it is capped at $1000. We have 3 requests that we will present to the administration whoever that group might me. One of those requests would be that we remove the July 1st date so that everybody that is in the University Support Staff is eligible no matter when you were hired. The 2nd one is that we are going to ask that it be raised from the $40 to $50 like it was several years back. The 3rd one that we want to ask for is that the 25 year cap be eliminated or raised. Now if we go in there and ask for those 3 things and they say we are only going
to give you 2 of them the 2 that I would suggest that we keep is number 1 to open it up so that everyone gets it because that would affect most of the people on campus that are classified at this point. Number 2 we raise the $40 to $50 because again that affects everybody. The cap would only affect those of us that have been in 25 years or longer, it is not the whole body of employees. If that happens the funding source, or don’t know if everyone is aware of it or not but this funding bonus is mandated by the state but each agency has to pay it out of their budget. The money for those bonuses no longer comes from the state like it use too. So President Bardo has told every classified employee you have that is eligible for that bonus you have to find that money in your budget to be available to make that payment. So yes there will have to be money coming from somewhere.

Q – You said that you don’t know who the committee is that you are going to take the papers too, to negotiate but if it goes that far is this going to be a onetime negotiation so that we do not have to go through that process again. Say the President is part of that process and we have changed the President is and the new President says “I wasn’t here when we went this all took place” so will we have to start that process all over again. If we have already switched over to the USS and everything was already put in place, will it need to be re-negotiated because there is a new President after everything was already approved?

Q – The way I understood it when the law was written, the policies are approved now when a new President comes in they can change the policies and procedures? Isn’t that the way the original law was written.

A - HR – I am going to try to be factual and precise, the university President position is the decision maker as it stands, unless he delegates his authority down all policies are approved by the university President. That is the way it is now, whether the classified staff stay in the civil service or they go to the USS system that is the way it will be. Administration ultimately you can look to the President, he has to make the approval the final rubber stamp. Randy is correct there is not an administrative committee that has been formed, but ultimately I want to be very clear that the President will be the decision maker in this.

A – My hope is that when this administrative committee is formed that it will include the President and his leadership team, which is made up of 10 people all of the VP’s, Eric Sexton and Andy Schlapp. I am hoping that they will all be involved in the final say.

Q – So if the President and we get a new one, will the new President honor the agreements already made.

A – We didn’t see Dr. Beggs come in and change any policies.

Q – A new President after everything is final, will a new President be able to change these policies.

A – Well policies are changed but they are usually not changed unless there is a need on campus. If a policy change is needed for some reason then yes that would go to whoever the current President would be and yes he could change it and that is the way it would be with us. As this transition if it was to take place, if it were to happen, this committee that is sitting now would slowly transition everything that we are doing over to the classified Senate which would then become the University Support Staff Senate and they would start to handle all of this. So if there were any policy changes that were needed it is my hope that it would go through the USS Senate to make those changes.

Q – You just said that President Bardo hasn’t changed anything as far as the classified staff is concerned but isn’t that exactly what we are going through now? I mean this process was initiated by President Bardo.

A – Matt – He is asking who started this committee, Renea – it started a year ago. Emily – Actually it started about 10 years ago it has been a discussion on campus about 10 years.

Q – When we vote in April or May are we going to be voting on policies that have already been agreed upon?

A – We are not going to present anything to you for a vote unless it has been agreed upon. It will be agreed upon by both the administration and the classified staff. We will take what we want to the administration and say what will you give to us from these, it will be a negotiation, and then we will bring that back to you to vote on it. We are still in the drafting phase as several of us of noted. Things in the presentation that we have now can change, these are living documents, we need employee input on this so that we know what you want to change. Then we will hold another round of Town Hall meetings with larger audiences, at that point we will say this is what we have come up with based on the employee input and the negotiations with administration, this is what you will be voting on.

Q – So we will actually know what the policies will be before we vote.
A – Yes.

Q – Have you projected once the vote is taken when this will go into place?

A – As soon as the vote is taken one way or the other it is done and it will go into effect and we are no longer part of the Civil Service. Here is the best case scenario that we would like to happen, once we vote and we vote to change to USS we get raises at the first of the fiscal year. That is best case scenario we are not going to guarantee that is going to happen.

Q – So we vote the university will be held to exactly what we vote for?

A – Yes, but KBOR has to approve it. But if we go with similar policies that have already gone in front of KBOR there is no reason why they would not approve it.

Q – We have the right to say yes or no?

A – Yes that is correct. If we vote yes the paperwork all goes to KBOR it is approved sent back and it is done. If we vote note this will all be disbanded and we are all done then too.