Minutes:

1) **Meeting was called to order** by Kevin Snook at 1:33pm.

2) **Approval of minutes**: The September 10, 2013 Staff Senate meeting minutes were approved by general consent with no changes.

3) **Treasurer’s Report**: We are currently operating in the red, but hope to have our operating budget allocated before the next meeting. The budget report was approved by general consent with no changes.

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4) Ombudsman Update – Dr. James Barnes, University Ombuds Office
   a) The Ombuds Office now has an office (I.G. Greer #236A) and a website ([http://ombuds.appstate.edu/](http://ombuds.appstate.edu/))
   b) The office provides confidential conversation to help faculty and staff talk through difficult situations at work. They do not provide legal advice or counseling.
   c) Twice a year, the Ombuds Office will report to the Chancellor on trends and major/recurring issues that have been raised by faculty/staff. These will be discussed in general terms, without disclosing identities of individuals or sharing any confidential information.

5) Guest Speaker – Kate Johnson, Appalachian and the Community Together (ACT)
   a) What is ACT? ACT does student development and leadership development, has an outreach center in the Student Union, coordinates major service events, and works with community partners such as local nonprofits to help prepare students to work with them and to prepare the partners to work with students. They also organize Stone Soup, a professional development event for nonprofit leaders. Civic Engagement works with faculty to incorporate service learning and community-based research into coursework.
   b) How to get involved with ACT:
      i) Sign up for ACT’s biweekly newsletter to hear about volunteer and community partnership opportunities.
      ii) Participate in events:
          (1) Need site leaders for MLK Challenge in January
          (2) Need leaders for Alternative Service Experience spring/fall break trips
          (3) Gobbler 5K on November 16. Need runners and event volunteers.
          (4) Hunger Games (new event this year): Canned food drive “with a twist.” For every 5 cans students collect, they are entered into a drawing to participate in the Hunger Games events, which educates participates about poverty and hunger.
Need volunteers for Don’t Throw It Away, a program that collects unwanted items when students move out in the spring, sells them when they move in the next fall, and donates the proceeds to a local nonprofit.

Visit volunteer.appstate.edu where you can sign up for an account and search for volunteer opportunities by topic, duration, etc. Popular, on-going opportunities like Habitat for Humanity and the F.A.R.M. Café are listed, as well as one-time or short-term opportunities.

c) Kevin Snook: Staff Senate has discussed organizing a day of service in conjunction with winter break campus closure if the campus decides to close campus during the 2014 holiday break. Staff get three days of Community Service Leave, so this would allow them to take advantage of that leave and volunteer for a good cause. Is that something ACT could help with? Kate: Absolutely, ACT could help you connect with community partners who may have volunteer needs during that timeframe.

d) Question from a Senator: Can anyone (e.g., community members, staff member’s families) sign up for ACT events and community service opportunities? Kate: It depends on the event. Some events are only for the Appalachian State community, especially those for which can take a limited number of participants. Others are open to the community because we can take an unlimited number of people. Certainly, community members can use ACT as a resource to find service opportunities.

6) Chair’s Update –

a) Chancellor Search Committee:

i) The committee held six open forums and received a lot of feedback from faculty and staff. We received feedback that the format of the forums was intimidating, since the forums were recorded and people had to come up to a microphone to make their comment. In response to this concern, there should be an anonymous form on the Chancellor Search website soon (chancellorsearch.appstate.edu). Right now, we do have a Contact form on that website, but it is not anonymous. If you want to give confidential feedback before the anonymous form is available, send it to Kevin Snook and he will pass it on to the search committee.

ii) Baker & Associates in Winston-Salem has been chosen as the search firm. They have been used for several major UNC system searches.

iii) Next step for search committee: Take the feedback from the open forums about what people want in a chancellor and use it to produce a job description that the search firm will use to find candidates and send to potential candidates.

iv) Kathy Whittington: Is this a completely closed search? Kevin Snook: It is neither open nor closed at this point because we have not made that decision yet. (In open searches, candidates’ identities are public and the candidates meet with people on campus. In a
closed search, no names are announced—other than to the search committee, search firm, Board of Trustees, and Board of Governors—until the Chancellor is named. The search committee is also considering a hybrid option in which the candidates’ names are never publicly released, but a group of campus representatives meet the candidates under a confidentiality agreement.) Closed searches are more common now, because open searches limit the candidate pool. Sitting professionals may not be comfortable applying for the position if we have an open search and their names will be released. Also, if everyone knows the candidate pool, it increases lobbying, which the Board of Governors does not welcome. (The search committee chooses three candidates and gives those names—not ranked—to the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors makes the selection from those three candidates, without further input from the campus.)

v) Sandy Hicks: I’ve heard comments from people who say that they understand the argument that a closed search is better when recruiting sitting professionals from major universities, but think that the justification is irrelevant if we are not able to recruit that type of candidate. Kevin Snook: I appreciate the feedback. I do not know what our budget for hiring will be.

vi) Carol Anderson: It concerns me that in a closed search, the only voice staff would have in the process is our one representative on the search committee. In an open search, staff members would have the opportunity to provide feedback and participate in the process.

vii) Amy Sanders: One of the reasons that we only have one staff representative on the search committee is that the current guidelines for conducting a chancellor search do not require staff representation at all. Staff Senate is trying to work with Staff Assembly to change that and ensure that staff always have representation in chancellor searches in the UNC system.

viii) Question: If this became a hybrid or partially-closed search, would there potentially be more staff representation in the group that gets to meet the candidates? Kevin Snook: Yes. I don’t know what percentage of representation staff would have in that pool, but we would fight for representation for staff, and not just administrative staff.

ix) Amy Sanders: Jeanne Underdown Collins is on the search committee, and she is an advocate for staff. Kevin Snook: Andy Koch is as well.

b) Board of Trustees and Budget Update:

i) Mission statement: The Board of Trustees agreed on a new mission statement for the university. Cathy Ziegler: Does the Board of Governors need to approve the new mission statement? Kevin Snook: Yes.

ii) The Board of Trustees received updated data from IRAP about the student body and incoming freshman class. We are taking “the best of the best” students, and our average [high school] GPA is over 4.0 now.

iii) University Advancement: We have a new deadline for the capital campaign, which coincides with Chancellor Peacock’s retirement: June 30, 2014.
iv) AppKIDS and Emergency Loan Fund: Kevin Snook had the opportunity to talk with the Trustees about AppKIDS and the ELF fund. Lee Barnes made donations to both AppKIDS and the ELF fund; hopefully other trustees will as well.

v) Amanda Perry: Going back to your earlier comment about student admissions and their GPA, is there any special consideration given to students from the immediate community? Kevin Snook: Yes, there was discussion about that, and there was a lot of discussion about the diversity of our student body in general, and whether we may be missing excellent students who just don’t have a GPA as high as the admitted students.

vi) State budget update: Appalachian State was given approximately $127 million in their state allocation. GA asked all campuses to make cuts in operation budgets; Appalachian was asked to make a 3.68% (~$4.7 million) cut. However, these cuts are offset by our increased enrollment and performance. Appalachian State is 15th out of the 16 UNC schools (not counting the School of the Arts) in state appropriations per student. We do not expect to see reductions in force (RIFs) this year, and we should actually see a net increase in staff and faculty positions. Staff Senate’s budget was not cut.

vii) Cathy Ziegler: Related to the earlier discussion of the role of GPA in admission decisions: Our budget is tied to student performance, including retention. Studies show that high school GPA correlates positively with college retention/completion.

viii) December calendar update: The December 23, 2014 holiday has been changed to December 292014 because December 23rd was selected at the state level as the December pay day, so we cannot be closed that day. See http://hrs.appstate.edu/faculty-staff/benefits/types-leave/holiday-schedule for the holiday schedule. (Note: After the Staff Senate meeting, a memo was distributed by Greg Lovins saying that the December 23, 2013 holiday has also been moved to Friday, December 27.)

7) HR Update – Kevin Snook:
   a) Kevin Snook is delivering the HR update because Angie Miller could not attend, since HR is extremely busy with open enrollment.

   b) Watauga Medical Center: We finally received news about the hospital’s status for next year: Watauga Medical Center will be in-network for the State Health Plan next year. However, there are some services and care providers within the hospital that are out-of-network, such as the pain management clinic and the hospitalist, so ask about particular doctors and services to find out if they are in-network. However, Watauga Medical Center is not a Blue Options designated hospital, so there will be a copay of ~$230. (The exact amount depends on your plan.) In Blue Options designated hospitals, all services should be in-network. Always go to the closest hospital in an emergency. All emergency care is considered in-network at any hospital.

   c) Sandy Hicks: Is there a list that says which Watauga Medical Center services are in- or out-of-network? Kevin Snook: No. You have to call and ask every time. Angie Miller has talked directly with Watauga Medical Center about this, but there is no definitive list. Sandy Hicks: That is a
problem. What recourse does a staff member have if they are told over the phone that a service is in-network but they get the bill and were billed out-of-network charges, and they do not have any written documentation? Kevin Snook: It is definitely a problem, and Staff Senate is lobbying to get Watauga Medical Center designated as a Blue Options hospital for 2015 so that this will not be an issue.

d) Amanda Perry: For planned procedures at Watauga Medical Center, you may be able to request a preauthorization from your doctor as documentation that the procedure/service is approved and in-network.

e) Sandy Hicks: I would like to ask that Human Resources develop a standard form that shows exactly what information a staff member needs to request from the hospital to make sure the service is in-network, so that a staff member can take that to the hospital and get it signed and have documentation.

f) Recognition of Human Resources - Amanda Perry: Should Staff Senate do something to recognize Human Resources for all of their work handling the health plan changes and open enrollment this year? Could people who would like to help with that fill out the Suggestion Box form on the Staff Senate website so that we can get together and decide what to do to thank them? (Note: Leave your name and contact information in the Suggestion Box, because it is anonymous.)

8) Committee Updates:

a) AppKIDS – Cathy Ziegler: We need volunteers for posts other than shopping or driving, such as staffing the information tables for an hour or two. Cathy distributed a volunteer sign-up sheet in the meeting, as well as flyers for Senators to post in their buildings. Contact an AppKIDS committee member for more information.

i) Kevin Snook: Our goal is just under $15,000 this year.

ii) Question: Since the Broyhill is closed, where are you going to gather? Cathy Ziegler: It depends on the date. The Grandfather Mountain Ballroom in the Student Union is the location for our primary day; if we have to do the snow date, the location will be the Parkway Ballroom.

b) Winter Break Committee – Lynn Church:

i) We had an excellent response to the survey about staff opinions on closing campus during the winter break and we thank all of you for your participation.

ii) One question we received repeatedly on the survey was about the energy cost savings a campus closure would create, and how those funds would come back to the campus. The university has a contract stating that the campus will reduce its energy consumption by a specified level or face rate increases, so meeting the mandatory energy reduction goal essentially preserves money that we will otherwise have to spend on energy costs, rather than generating new income.
iii) The committee is working to find as many options as possible for staff members who would be affected if the campus closes for the holidays, such as alternate work locations, comp. time, flex time, and committee service leave, so that staff members do not necessarily have to use vacation time.

iv) The committee will pass its recommendation on to the Chancellor’s Cabinet, which will make the final decision. The committee hopes for a decision by January 2014 about the 2014-15 holiday schedule so that staff members will have almost a year’s notice.

c) Scholarship Committee – Kevin Snook: We are selling Dining Cards on our website to raise money for Staff Senate scholarships. We ordered 125 cards, and we are selling them at $35 each. The cards are for buy one, get one free meals at many local restaurants. Chelsie Eldreth: It would really be helpful if every Senator could not only buy a card for themselves, but also try to sell two or three. Courtney Gainey: Would it be helpful to have those cards available at New Employee Orientation? Kevin Snook: Yes, that would be very helpful.

d) Chancellor’s Advisory Committee Update – Angel Wood: We will meet with the Chancellor on November 26, and the committee will meet before that to set our agenda for the meeting with the Chancellor. E-mail Angel Wood by October 29 if you have topics you would like to suggest for the Chancellor meeting.

9) Old Business:  
a) Staff Senate Suggestion Box process: Amy Love is working on a process for handling comments that come in via the anonymous suggestion box on the Staff Senate website. We will discuss Suggestion Box comments in each officers meeting, post them on the website (when appropriate), answer what we can and follow up on questions/comments that we cannot answer immediately.

b) ASU Women’s Basketball Tickets – Cathy Ziegler: The team provided cards that allow any employee of the university to get into a women’s basketball game for free. Cards were distributed in the meeting.

c) The State Employees Combined Campaign is currently open. The campaign ends November 28, and prizes are given every other week.

d) Give a Family a Coat – Kevin Snook: We collect gently-used winter clothing every year. We’re seeking a volunteer to lead the coat drive this year. Russell Paige: It is not a big time commitment. You create decorated collection boxes and ask staff to donate. E-mail Kevin Snook if you want to volunteer to lead the coat drive.

e) Staff Assembly: Kevin Snook: Next week in Chapel Hill, the Staff Senate representatives from every campus will meet in Chapel Hill. If you have a topic you would like to bring up in Staff Assembly, such as issues that would need Board of Governors approval or other statewide changes, contact Kevin Snook.
f) American Cancer Society study – Kevin Snook: The ACS is looking for volunteers to participate in a 20+ year cancer prevention study, which will involve initial bloodwork and periodic follow-ups. It is going to be one of the most comprehensive studies the ACS has ever done. Initial enrollment and bloodwork will be 11/7 and 11/9 here in Boone. More information and sign-ups are at www.cps3watauga.org.

10) New Business:
   a) Chancellor Peacock will attend the November Staff Senate meeting.
   b) Our holiday party will be on December 10 at 1:30pm. Amanda Perry: Is it open to everyone [not just Senators]? Kevin Snook: Yes. Amanda: Should we consider moving it to a time where it would overlap with night shift employees? Kevin Snook: It is too late to change the schedule for this year, but that would be a great idea for next year.
   c) Debi Tibbett: In the last meeting, we discussed the possibility of doing an appreciation event or other recognition for Dining Services staff, since they have to prepare all of the food for the staff appreciation breakfast. Was there any follow-up on that? Kevin Snook: I e-mailed Charlie Wallin and he said that staff would have to come in at their normal time (before breakfast) on the day of the staff appreciation breakfast, but that they would be able to participate in the breakfast. They already do an appreciation event just for Food Services staff in December.

11) Adjournment – Sandi Hicks motioned to adjourn, seconded by Carol Anderson. The meeting adjourned at 2:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Love, Secretary