MEETINGS: The last report was for the February meeting on February 21st. The material collected for the report was accumulated after February 1st. Since then there was the BOR meeting on February 9th, a CUSF Council Meeting and USM Advocacy Day on February 21st. The following is a brief summary of these activities since the last report.

- **BOR Meeting** – The BOR met on February 9th. There was a general session presentation by Rick Legon from the AGB (Association of Governing Boards). The accompanying article titled: “The Business of Higher Education” was provided as an attachment to the ExCom and Council agendas.

- **AAAC Meeting** – There were no AAAC meetings during February.

- **Symposium on Diversifying the Faculty** – The Symposium on Diversifying the Faculty will be held at the College Park Marriott Hotel and Conference Center on April 16th. Invitations have been sent out. At this time the CUSF ExCom, Council members, and Senate Chairs were invited to the symposium.

COMMENTARIES: This month there are two commentaries. The first is a reflection on the elections and the second is a thank you to everyone who helped make Advocacy Day successful.

Respectfully Submitted (3/2/18)
Robert B. Kauffman, Ph.D.
Chair, Council of University System Faculty

Chair’s Commentary 1803.1: A Reflection on the Elections and ExCom Positions

At the February meeting one of the Council members asked the question regarding what were the responsibilities of each of the ExCom positions. As I reflected upon the question, I realized that at one time or another I had the privilege of serving in each position. With the upcoming elections, this is a good time to explain the responsibilities of each position, to reflect upon the different positions, and what they entail.

The first CUSF position I held was Secretary. As might be expected, Section 4.b.c of the bylaws states that “The Secretary shall keep minutes and records of Council...” Not only does the Secretary take the minutes of the Council meetings, but the Secretary takes the minutes of the ExCom and Senate Chairs meetings. Everyone jokes that it is the hardest job on ExCom and in some ways it is. One of the most important things I learned as Secretary was to write in terms of political consequences. It is important to
accurately record the minutes. However, it was equally important to write the minutes in such a way as to not cause unintentional harm to those in attendance such as the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor or other members of System. One other thought. As it has been with others before me and after me, the Secretary position was an entry position onto ExCom. Because of its workload, few people actively seek it out. Rarely is it a contested position. Work hard, and take good notes. Few will acknowledge your contribution, but they will note your work ethic and desire to serve CUSF. For me it led to other roles on ExCom.

After serving as Secretary, I served in the At-large position for a year. There are two At-large positions. One of the main responsibilities of the At-large position is to write the Newsletter. On occasion, the At-large position has also served as one of the Committee chairs (e.g. Legislative Affairs, Educational Policy, and Membership and Rules). This seems to have worked well.

Section 4.5.b of the bylaws state that “The Vice-Chair shall serve as acting Chair in the absence of the Chair and shall be responsible for other duties as assigned by the Council and/or Executive Committee....” Although not specifically stated in the bylaws, the primary responsibility of the vice chair has evolved into a position of working with the Senate Chairs. At the bare minimum, this involves organizing a fall and spring meeting. A second function has been conducting the data collection in the survey of Senate Chairs regarding the state of shared governance on the campuses. Overall, this is one area that I wish I would have done more and I believe that we need to do more. I should note that when I was a Senate Chair, I would always look forward to the fall and spring Senate Chair’s meeting. It provided me a chance to learn what was going on at the other campuses and to find out what was going at System. As noted, we need to do more with the Senate Chairs. However, that is a topic for another day.

Next, I served as Chair. In Section 4.5.a of the bylaws, the duties of the Chair are a little more defined than for the other officers. The Chair shall: (1) Preside at all meetings of the Council and be responsible for supervision and execution of its business; (2) Serve as the chief liaison between the Chancellor and the Council and the Board of regents and the Council; (3) Attend all Board meetings, or send a designee; (4) Submit to the Chancellor annually a report on the state of shared governance within the system; (5) Serve one year as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee with voice and vote as Past-Chair. Term limited, I will serve as Past Chair next year.

In contrast with the other ExCom positions, the Chair works with groups other than faculty. It is a position where you meet and work with the Board of Regents, Presidents and Provosts. In its bare essence, my job description reads “event planner and report writer.” It is not far from being the truth. Also, the report writing goes to goal of increasing communications. Along with preparing the ExCom and Council agendas, I write a Chair’s Report for the Council, another report for Chancellor’s Council, and yet another report for the BOR. Although there may be some overlap, they are different reports. Also, I write the State of Shared Governance Report for the Chancellor in March. In addition, I attend the corresponding meetings for each group including the Provosts. Fortunately, I don’t have to write a report for the Provosts too.

In looking back, being a former Senate Chair was probably my best preparation for being Chair of CUSF. As a Senate Chair, I had many of the same responsibilities and functions that I currently have as the Chair of CUSF. As Senate Chair, I had to deal with a President. Now, I have to deal with twelve presidents. It was helpful training. In both positions, I had the internal committees to coordinate and help function properly. As a Senate Chair, I had to run a meeting efficiently. In these respects, it provided good training for my current position. Perhaps the biggest lesson was how to move an agenda forward and to advance the common interest when you don’t have any power. Remember, we are advisory only. We have to
convince others that what we believe is in our best interest is in their best interest too. This requires the development of good political skills. Often people think of political skills as a negative attribute. It isn’t. Being advisory, it is a skill needed to advocate for faculty with the President and administration. It is for these reasons that when looking back over my involvement with CUSF, my training as Senate Chair was good preparation for being Chair of CUSF.

Two years have come and gone quickly. When I became Chair, I had two overriding goals. The first was to improve communication among CUSF constituencies and the second was to restore CUSF’s influence as an advisory board with System and the Board of Regents. Developing communications included encouraging dialogue between campuses and in particular with System and the Board of Regents. The second goal dovetailed with the first. It was important at the time, and remains important now, for CUSF to advocate for and advance issues that are common to most of the institutions in System and not issues that affect just the home institution. Taken together, the two goals are really about developing relationships with those who we are advising. It involves trust. Remember, we are advisory and it is our job to get others to buy into what we think is important and to get them to do our bidding. I believe that we have done this. Some of the outward signs of the communications and relationships developed include the visitation by the Chancellor and Chair of the BOR to our meetings. The new Chair will have his or her own vision. These are to increase communications among member institutions and within Council and to develop relationships that increase CUSF’s advisory capacity with System and the Board of Regents.

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Chair’s Commentary 1803.2: Advocacy Day – A Thank You

As in previous years, System sponsored Advocacy Day on February 21, 2018. This was a team effort between System and the student, staff and faculty Councils. Special thanks goes to Patrick Hogan, Vice Chancellor, Office of Government Relations, Andy Clark, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Office of Government Relations, Caden Fabbi, Chair, USM Student Council, Lisa Gray, Chair, Council of University System Staff, and Chris Brittan-Powell, Legislative Affairs Committee Chair of CUSF. Although I participated, I took more of a secondary role in the organization efforts. For CUSF, the Legislative Affairs Committee of CUSF has taken on the organizational responsibility of Advocacy Day. In this respect, Chris did a very good job of organizing meetings with key legislators. The appearance of the Chancellor was a highlight and amplified the importance of the event. In addition, we had 15 CUSF members in attendance. Again, a thank you to everyone who helped make Advocacy Day successful.

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