

Please stand by for realtime captions. [Captioner is on hold, waiting for event to begin.]

This time it is 3:02 PM, and I would like to call this to an open session, meeting 349 of SSA Board of Regents, September 12, 2021, at this time we will do a Roll Call . >> Tom Mason. >> David Alders.

Bridget Henderson.

Judy Olson. >> Laura Rectenwald

Nancy Windham >> -- Spencer Coffey -- Is having technical difficulties and will join us coffee, will not -- We will have called some mineral call. At this time a report concerning campus culture and University budget. Intended as a report and follow-up called the listening tour we went on last week, met as a board last Monday, although it seems a lot longer at this point. That is because a lot has happened, we learned a lot in that time. Immediately after our meeting on Monday. We began to meet with various sectors of the campus community we would go and listen to what they were concerned about and learn from the discussions. I want to do an overview of the meetings we had, the general approach to each one of those meetings. Then offer my report on what was expressed and what we heard in those meetings. Six meetings I participate in with Dr. Gordon, the first we termed leadership counsel, that is the one we started after the board meeting Monday, Dr. Gordon and I , representation from the chair of Dean's, and also from the chair of the department chairs. Then from the faculty sent it through the Senate and then through the Council. Later on we met it through the genie -- 9 AM we met with staff counsel, recently formed counsel by Dr. Gordon, with staff members across campus administrative staff custodial staff, physical staff UPDA staff and membership. Representation of all staff across campus. Roughly 30 to 35 people were in attendance of that meeting. 9 AM Tuesday, at noon on Tuesday we attended the chairs for him, representation of all academic chairs on campus. At 2 PM we met with the University budget counsel, next day Wednesday, 2:30 PM, we met with the Senate. Most of these meetings lasted two hours generally Dr. Gordon made introductory remarks I made remarks and then we opened up the discussion to groups, to listen to concerns. The chairs formed and was slightly different than all other meetings we had at that meeting it was initially attended by Dr. Gordon, and provosts Lorenzo Smith, and after introductory remarks. dirt Gordon and Dr. Smith -- Dr. Gordon and Dr. Smith attended both of meetings

as VP of administration attended, and she stayed with the chairs forum, Dr. Gordon and Dr. Friday, met with student leadership, a part of the listening tour and I was not in attendance at that meeting, based on what I heard, I broke it down to three different categories, board of regents. Dr. Gordon, and budget. I want to give a report on what I heard. I want to be clear on this, I think the board must hear this. That was expressed in all meetings. This was a listening tour, that we wanted to hear what the concerns are, and that we would bring those concerns back to the board this was a report of what was expressed in these meetings not a report of findings, this is what we heard , and

since we are doing this in an open forum, there are no soundbites taken of what we heard. Those used out of context, and I want them to use them in the full context and not to be considered report of conclusions, very instructive to know what it is that we heard in these meetings. I will start with the Board of Regents. It was very clear across all of these constituencies over a long period of time, many decades and through now, the Board of Regents is perceived to be, and is in fact inaccessible and unapproachable to the folks that we spoke with. It was frequently stated that no matter who we were talking to come the highest level of faculty. Throughout the staff and who matter who it was, they were not allowed to speak to the regions, and the Regents and also apply to casual conversation. And in SFA, and those folks

felt slightly more comfortable, and approached me in the examples that they did want to tell me in particular and to others, they felt they couldn't, they felt consequences if they approach the Board of Regents, they just wanted to say how great my dad was, they didn't feel they would be able to say that without some type of consequences, and other stories I heard throughout the week like that. Frequently stated in these different forums, that the Board of Regents are out of touch with the campus, frustration has been expressed regarding Dr. Gordon's raise, and how the board did not have the full scope of the scale of the budget in April, or before then, this decision alone caused anger and distrust amongst the board, I was question on whether the Board of Regents were aware with this associated staff salaries and compensation, there was frequent sentiment that the board has been complicit in not being more in tune with the campus, they have bit more shield of protection that we didn't know, staff counsel members expressed they had to go to great lengths prior to board meetings, to prepare for the meeting, and they felt it was a big show. They thought, and I walk him and -- And I welcomed the comments -- They would be focus more on the University and less circumstance involved in terms of just presence on campus, the culture of being on approach herbal -- On being unapproachable and inaccessible, for many years it was said in these meetings it was how it's been for as long as I've been here, and I been here -- And I have been here 4 years, -- And the fear of consequences for speaking out. I want to make it clear what I'm saying is not being presented as can you believe, this was said? Or anything like that manner. We provided a platform for open discussion and we welcomed this feedback. I often heard throughout these meetings, this was the first time a member of the Board of Regents has meant here, and express ourselves in met with us, and express herself to the Board of Regents, we did discuss. When these topics came up the difference between governance and management. We discussed the need to find an effective and appropriate communication channel. On substances of issues, on the University basis, and we discussed we are all people. No board member, or anyone else on campus should ever be off limits. For just casual, dictation, communication or human interaction, this is what was expressed during these meetings not conclusions. Just as I heard about the Board of Regents, information that I didn't want to hear, and opportunity about himself and we didn't want to hear on his behalf, it was expressed that Dr. Gordon has an ability to take criticism and the healthy way, and to take authoritarian, and the word bully was used frequently, there was a chilling effect on shared governance, it was

expressed that others take part in others work, but not when it is unsuccessful, and poor communication

reorganization or proposals that caused unrest on the campus, and effort would be abruptly dropped. This what was discussed in the board meetings and implemented, and discussed in the meetings attended, implemented without full understanding of the cost, and the permanent loss to vacated positions was not properly communicated and resulted in significant frustrations on campus. Specifics were given with regard to abrupt changes in force term lengths and early COVID months and early months, abrupt Tatian, of mini Masters, and such the low fall of 2020 required hours of work from faculty and staff reported, without all consideration they had been through with COVID and all of the implementations and others what they term to be abrupt changes. Overall they felt and in that expressed, what was described little productivity, shared governance is a hot topic on campus. I've learned a lot

more about it this week, and I'm still learning the background facts on this. My understanding what was expressed, after mounting frustrations the faculty, Senate and the form expressed -- Forum expressed in these, and I was told in those meetings Dr. Gordon, represented by membership that he acted initially in an angry manner, provided in these meetings he responded that the Board of Regents as a whole was angry at the groups who were proposing these governance, MOU on shared governance has been pursued, and faculty members have expressed frustration, believing that Dr. Gordon has made this taken credit, or initiated by the organization's, I do not have all details on this topic. I did hear it is a source of significant frustration and has resulted in anger and distrust on the campus. The chairs forum,

where temperatures ran high and emotional meeting a lot of raw emotion including resentment, and to say Morel is low in the faculty ranks is a gross understatement. Concerning the budget. There were a lot of discussions, concerning the budget throughout the meetings what was expressed by faculty and staff, there have not been substances, substantive raises in years, and they are told they are the number one priority on campus but not reflected in budgeting, they are low salaries compared to peer institutions, and frequently stated in these meetings academics is the reddening -- Revenue on the campus, and the arm that takes the cuts, and they should not cut from this, athletics not represented at these meetings that we attended, but frequently discussed at the meetings that we were in athletics is high revenue generator and should not get budget increases but budget cuts. The staff indicated, and in this Council meeting, it is difficult, and they were concerned about speaking openly, when they don't have tenure, they were concerned about outsourcing, morale has been low, they are concerned they won't have a job within the year. They indicated they believe themselves to be the lowest paid employees on campus, for that reason are not given equal footing, they had analogy of a three-legged stool, SFA is a university where the faculty is one leg, the staff is a leg, and the students are a leg, all of the legs should be equal length to have a successful University.

The furlough was discussed throughout these meetings as being very difficult on everyone. The staff expressed simple recognition that the furlough days were a sacrifice, and would have gone a long way towards helping with the frustrations. Overall frustration in understanding the budget, a common theme throughout all of these meetings. Of frustration, people don't know how much money is in the budget, and they don't have an understanding of why that can't be clearly understated and understand it to them, if it is a budget that is complicate , and too complicated, then it's a budget's responsibility to have a full understanding, they are voting on the budget, then it shouldn't be described as a complicated document, but easily described across the campus community. Overall my impressions. From the listening tour, the faculty and staff do not feel listened to, or involved, considered in decision-making, they don't feel they have a voice. They feel and express that the administrative arm whichever it may be applying to them, has been dismissive to them, if they have felt this over a long period of time. This is not something that they say emerged recently, but how it's always been, and as long as they've been employed on campus, some of them employed for a very long time, 28, 25, 30 years. These issues while long-standing, have reached a boiling point. These issues have risen to the level as being attainable, and this is a tenable situation, a tenable situation and at least in the groups what we interacted this week, that situation resulted in the events and actions taken. Events taken last week, as you know, no confidence from the cat -- From the Senate -- And the Council, and students, I believe easy all of those documents as the board members?

There is a common thread in all of these meetings. It doesn't matter who you're talking to on campus, students, faculty, staff, regardless of perceived levels, we all agree, SFA is a special place, we don't want this unique university just to exist. We want the University to thrive. Under the current climate, and what we've learned this week, we know we are not thriving right now. What we learned makes us realize we enter a time of reflection. We have to be introspect , to acknowledge who we are right now, and we have to decide who we want to be. SFA leadership in the board needs to be regarded as honest and trustworthy, competent, and deeply committed to the faculty staff and students, and the future of SFA as a whole, and we need to have our fiscal house in order, to have it understood, and we need to be a place where we have collaborative working relationships with all of our SFA stakeholders. That is now the time for us to reflect on those things. It was a tough week. We learned a lot. They were not easy meetings, but they were meetings that overall, will lead us to be a better place, we can springboard to better relationships, a better University. Because we've had these meetings. We can't just have these meetings and go about our business. We have to figure out what our next steps are. We need to figure that out immediately. That is my report. On the listening tour. At this time, unless there are questions, in open session, we could move into our executive session. With that at this time, we will proceed to the executive session.

>> [Captioner Standing By] [Board of Regents is in an Executive Session]

[Captioners Transitioning]

>> [EVENT HAS EXCEEDED SCHEDULED TIME. CAPTIONER MUST PROCEED TO
CAPTIONER NEXT SCHEDULED EVENT. DISCONNECTING AT 5PM MT]

[Event concluded]