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An Open Statement from the USM Faculty Senate to the USM Administration

Preface from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee: On January 27, 2006, the Faculty Senate endorsed without dissent the following statement, subject to some editorial revisions, which have now been incorporated. The original statement also contained two sentences concerning the lack of a meeting of the committee formed to consider outsourcing and the lack of information about the composition of that committee. Information about the committee has since been provided and the committee is now scheduled to meet in March; those sentences have been removed from the current statement to reflect those developments.

Since January 27, Mr. Lassen has announced his intentions to leave the CFO position at USM. With Mr. Lassen's impending departure and given his key role in outsourcing endeavors, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee believes the initiative to outsource physical plant operations should be revisited in its entirety with full involvement of the committee.

The Faculty Senate urges the Administration to respond in timely and meaningful ways to the legitimate questions and concerns the university community has about the prospects of outsourcing Physical Plant operations.

To date, meaningful responses have not been forthcoming from the Administration even though there are indications that the Administration has put outsourcing Physical Plant operations on a "fast track." The paragraphs that follow provide both a "history" of this outsourcing initiative as well as evidence that important questions still await responses from the Administration.

Just before the 2005 holidays, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Gregg Lassen announced in the press that the possibility of outsourcing USM physical plant was being explored. He went out of his way to assuage concerns being expressed about outsourcing Physical Plant operations, and he assured the USM community that the university would go the direction of outsourcing only if the university and employees "benefited." He further stated, "We won't do this if it's not a win-win situation." Mr. Lassen followed up by establishing a committee to help in the "evaluation" of the merits of outsourcing.

In a December 19, 2005 letter to Mr. Lassen, the Faculty Senate raised a series of questions and concerns about the motivation behind the decision to explore outsourcing of Physical Plant operations. The Faculty Senate representative to the committee Mr. Lassen created posed related questions in a January 11, 2006 email to the chair of this committee, Mr. Russ Willis. There have been no responses to either communication. Physical Plant employees are apparently being told that the date for outsourcing is July 1,

2006. Most Physical Plant employees believe the outsourcing is a “done deal,” and they are apparently being advised to visit Human Resources to find out what their options may be.

The Faculty Senate now wonders if there is a meaningful process for studying the merits of outsourcing Physical Plant operations. Maybe a “process” was “established” merely for show. Perhaps a decision to outsource has already been made without input from or regard for the effect it will have on valued USM employees. The time is now for the USM Administration to operate openly on this matter and provide real data upon which it has based its decision to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP’s) so that the committee Mr. Lassen established can provide informed advice. Further, if RFP’s have been solicited and are received, they should be shared with the committee so that it might offer additional informed advice.

On behalf of the Faculty Senate and the Senate Executive Committee,

Dr. William Powell, President