Staff Senate Minutes

April 07, 2022

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Margie Link called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Thursday April 07, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. in WebEx virtual online meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

**Senators Present:**

Rachel Broussard

Judy Crouch  
Deidra Dillard

Cynthia Dixon

Brandi Duvall   
Cole Hendrix  
Cindy Hubbard  
Margie Link  
Teresa Lutz  
Krystle Manning

Kim McKown

Amber Meeks  
Cody Parsons

Lydia Rogers  
Tammy Rye  
Lyndsay Simpson  
Thomas Strahan

Jamie Young

**Senators Absent:**

Angie Bell

Susan Johnson

**Visitor(s):**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Alexis Scrimshire | Connie Herring | Michelle Price |
| Alida Gutierrez | Donna Henderson | Paula Reed |
| Allison Sheehan | Heather Taylor | Rhonda Ralph |
| Andrea Eubanks | Jennifer Griffin | Myra Rollans |
| Blandy Pedrez | Joceline Argueta | Samantha Huggins |
| Bryan Bramlett | Kylia Stewart | Shirly Bonner |
| Brandie Gibbs | Laury Fiorello | Sophie Cheshier |
| Brittany Reves | Lisa Clark | Tammy Guarino |
| Brooke Briley | Marika Lederman | Tammy Weaver |
| Christi Brown | Megan Morris | Tanda Morrison |
| Christina Denise Wallis | Melissa South | Tanya Martin |
| Christy Longoria | Meredith Jones Lawson | Valli Wanzer |
| Victoria Tomlin | Rachel Whitman | William Tomlin |

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the March 3, 2022 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Rye filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Crouch seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

**Special Report**

Ms. Laury Fiorello:

* Address the memo concerning payout of sick leave for employees whose job titles changed from Classified to Non-Classified by passage of Arkansas Senate Bill 345 (Act 496), passed on March 29, 2021. Staff Senate requesting that employees affected by this change be grandfathered in per ATU Staff Handbook. (See attached memo for job titles affected.) Will survey other institutions in the state to see what their staff handbooks say. Will align with best practices across the state. Will research the financial impact of grandfathering in these employees. Will require a policy change that will have to be approved by the Board of Trustees. If approved, the university will have to put money aside for future pay out. There is further consideration by the legislators to move other classified positions, so financial impact might be greater.
* Strategic Planning Committee will host forums. Staff are encouraged to review the strategic plan proposal and provide feedback.
* Mileage increase was approved. The state approved $.52 per mile reimbursement, this is up from $.42 per mile reimbursement.
* The 2022-2023 budget is progressing towards final presentation.
* Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). ATU received approximately $43M in HEERF funds. $19M went towards student awards and has been 100% utilized and dispersed. We are down to approximately $4M. This is allocated to projects that HEERF committee is finalizing. Higher Ed institutions were approached and could apply for supplemental funding. ATU has requested and applied for additional $5M, half would go towards student awards, other half would go to bringing enhancements to tutoring. Also looking at health initiatives, as well as miscellaneous, technological equipment that may be needed in the event that we have to pivot again to a more remote environment in the classroom.

One Stop Shop Questions and Answers – Brandie Gibbs:

* One Stop Shop answers the main line for the University. Average about 1,000 phone calls a month, and resolve about 80% of those without escalating them. What that means, when a question is asked, it is answered and resolved and caller is guided through any other process. They might have more complex issues that belong in appropriate respective offices. Those are the 20% that are transferred to respective areas. There is also the chat bot and live chat. About 168 live chat in the first month that is was up and running. Available Monday through Friday, 8:00a.m. – 5:00 p.m. There is 75 to 80% resolution rate on chatbot. Adjust the script on chat box to make sure it is current with information from the university and information the guests are looking for.
* Doing outreach to all students where faculty have notified that students are struggling in some form or fashion. Also doing Covid outreach. If student is in quarantine, One Stop Shop calls and offers assistance. Do you have technology you need? Are you in a space where you need some assistance? Do you have any questions? Are you able to contact your instructors? Check on their well being and mental health, just let them know the university is there for them in any form or fashion.
* Host focus groups from our students to identify what the university is excelling at and areas we can improve upon. Information will be shared after it is analyzed and summarized. Have a financial literacy program because financial issues is the number one reason that students leave.

Concerns, Questions, Responses - One Stop Shop:

Concern: Initial Staffing of One Stop Shop was not advertised. Employees were not able to apply for the positions nor go through the interview process. One Stop Shop employees were chosen and hired without having to go through the usual hiring process.

Response: Positions did go through the position review committee and at the time the internal promotion transfer reassignment policy was in play. That is what the University chose to use to staff the One Stop Shop.

Concern: After One Stop Shop employees were hired, with salaries much higher than other positions, then student workers were trained to answer the phones and answer questions.

* Working with the student workers has not always been a positive experience. They don’t know how to look up individuals and transfer calls correctly.
* Also concerns about student safety, specifically FERPA regulations. Are student works giving out information to individuals that are not on FERPA?

Response: Policy standing right now, for the University in regards to salaries, these employees were hired in at 90% of CUPA, which is standard practice for the University. Regarding the concern with student workers, they have gone through fall and spring training. If anyone has any issues with the student workers, bring them to Brandie Gibbs directly so she can resolve it. If she doesn’t know about it, she cannot resolve it. Student workers have been trained on FERPA. They know to check RHACOMM and SPACMNT. There are practices in place for the live chat, as well, just to make sure we are pulling student’s privacy.

Concern: Proportion of resources devoted to the One Stop Shop—both in practice (board minutes about renovation and job posting for Admin III) and in theory (recent SERC committee draft). Where is proof of the One Stop’s efforts and achievement of goals.

Response: The $200,000 the University allocated to the One Stop Shop has been used for salaries and a few supplies. The One Stop Shop did apply for and was approved for an innovation grant. All staff were encouraged to apply for innovation funds.

Concern: At the beginning of Fall 2021 this was presented as a trial endeavor. Has that changed?

Response: Calling it a trial endeavor, is a little off. We are calling this a pilot year and the purpose of that was to reach out to the stakeholders. We have met with directors, faculty, and staff across campus to make sure everyone had a voice in the issues and areas we would help tackle. Continuing, this has been considered our pilot year, because we’re trying to figure out how to be most effective to help retention and enrollment. So, as a pilot year, we know some things will change, and asking for a little grace. Looking at return on investment, see what constituents need across campus community and provide assistance and then assess our time.

Concern: Do students know that the One Stop Shop exists?

Response: Getting students to read or answer their emails is an uphill battle. One Stop Shop has done several initiatives to get the word out. Meeting and talking with students we’ve worked with to get a social media post out there. There’s a video about the One Stop, and we’ve done emails, phone calls, tabling events, and worked at several events on campus and continue to RSVP those. Go to student union, cafeteria, BazTech and talk to students. Do a monthly feature on The Scoop email. Looking at top 10 questions and responses to help educate the campus community.

Concern: What do you see the Admin III position doing in the One Stop Shop?

Response: Be the primary front desk person and answer the phone and help alleviate Jamie so she can work on larger projects. One of the goals, this first year, is to track and assess everything. Tracking every person we speak to, topics that were asked. For accuracy, we’re giving the appropriate responses and using that as a training tool. Goal was 60% resolution of calls. Happy with that resolution rate.

Concern: Can you speak about how the salaries were set? Are they competitive with other One Stop Shops? How were those positions and pay grades established to begin with?

Response: Looked at what positions were available. One position was equivalent to and associate director position and one was equivalent to a project/program specialist position. There is a position review for a need and necessity for a division or department, and it’s brought forward in research to see what position would best fit and then H/R sees what positions are available. Then the CUPA data is analyzed. Positions are 90% of median, not 90% of maximum.

Concern: How are you going to address training going forward? Because you won’t have the same student workers every semester or every year. What’s the procedure going forward?

Response: Similar to the way recruitment training was handled and the way training is handled at the beginning of the year. Will meet will all the offices, sit down and talk to them about training. Spend an extensive amount of time with Financial Aid, Academic Advising, and several other departments. Some offices gave great fact sheets. Trying to handle lower level questions and leaving technical and special circumstances to the experts.

Concern: Additional funds approved for the One Stop Shop by the Board of Trustees

Response: Maintenance funds that set aside for this particular goal. These are not innovation funds. This project is still months or maybe a year away. An architect is looking at the project.

Concern: One Stop Shop is a Pilot program.

Response: There’s some confusion that the One Stop is a pilot. It is not a pilot, it is permanent. This has been the pilot year for the One Stop Shop. Trying to find the best fit for the University and how they can support other offices and students. Identify the foothold and set a standard for the main things they are responsible for year after year.

Concern: Is One Stop Shop tracking data to help take some of the workload off other offices? Are you working closely with other offices so you can service those students? Are you truly becoming a One Stop Shop?

Response: Yes, we are tracking calls. Perfect example is that we are only escalating about 20% of the calls we receive. We are taking about 800 calls through the main line of the University. We are answering those internally without forwarding them. It’s an ongoing process, adjusting so the tracking can be more accurate.

Concern: Do you have meetings regularly with other departments you’re helping to find their needs and issues so you can take some of their burden? Do you know if the departments feel like you are helping them?

Response: That is part of the next steps. We are reaching out to the departments to talk to them again and do another round of training. Will be an ongoing process. If we call and as a clarifying question from a department, and do not transfer the student, we count that as a resolution. Just trying to make sure we have the most accurate information.

Clarification about Training: One Stop Shop does not have training sessions every month with Academic Advising. Reference was to the Monthly Undergraduate Communication Standup meeting held on the first Thursday of each month for certain offices in Student Affairs. This monthly meeting is not be confused with other training and meetings.

Concern: The One Stop Shop is hiring an Admin III. What do you say to those offices that can’t hire an Admin?

Response: I’m sorry, I can empathize and that is not my decision, all I can do is ask for resources. I write grant proposals or innovation proposals every chance I get. I encourage staff to do the same.

**Committee Reports**

* **President’s Communication-** The University Strategic Planning Steering Committee will have Open Forums on April 19 – 21, 2022. Watch OneTech announcements for times and places.
* **Budget Advisory –** See Notes attached below.
* **COVID Taskforce-** No Report
* **Scholarship –** No report
* **University Strategic Planning** – No Report
* **Insurance Committee –**Meeting on March 18, 2022 – see notes below.
* **IT Prioritization and Impact** –
* **University Communication Working Group –** No report
* **Campus Space and Utilization –** No report
* **Staff Awards –** No report
* **Special Projects/Events-** No report

**New Business / Discussion**

* Classified Personnel transferred to Non-Classified Personnel per Senate Bill 345 (Act 496). Laury spoke about earlier in meeting. See notes above.
* Staff Senate Elections – Coming up this month. Academic Affairs – 5 positions, Student Affairs – 2 Positions, Admin and Finance – 1 position. Staff are encouraged to join Staff Senate. Goal is to have new senators by May 5th meeting.
* Bone Marrow Drive – April 14, 2022. Partnering with Earl Young Foundation and DKMS Labs. Mr. Young will be here on April 14 and speak to classes and labs in McEver. Door prizes are available - $500 Scholarships (Qty 4), Free Red Hangtag for 2022-2023 year (Qty. 1), Snacks and drinks from Chartwells (Qty. 1), Gift from Barnes & Noble (Qty. 1).
* Announcements – Follow up on Diversity and Inclusion Working Group. No decision was made concerning this working group because Dr. Brooks is leaving ATU, her last day is June 10, 2022.
* Faculty/Staff Wellness webpage: <https://www.atu.edu/cetl/wellness.php> Events are hosted by Faculty, concern is if Staff are welcome to join. Staff is absolutely encouraged to attend these events. There is a Well-being Committee that has staff representation.
* Green & Gold Food Pantry being re-established. Senator Strahan attended the Hunger Alliance Summit on April 14, 2022 and accepted a $1,000 Grant for ATU’s Food Pantry. Senator Strahan has volunteered to take the lead on getting the food pantry back up and running. Working on finding space for the food pantry. Some local non-profits may be able to help in getting the pantry re-established. Possible idea is to establish a standing committee to help with the food pantry, so one person isn’t solely responsible. Also work with some of the student organizations to see how they are addressing hunger and food insecurity on campus.

**Old Business**

* None to report

**Annoucements**

* None to report

**Next Meeting**

Thursday, May 5, 2022, 10 a.m. via WebEx

**Meeting Adjourned**

Senator Rye filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Broussard seconded the motion. The Senate voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,   
Lyndsay Simpson, Secretary

Request for Consideration

1. GENERAL

Objective / Purpose

Request to grandfather in employees whose job titles changed from Classified to Non-Classified by passage of Arkansas Senate Bill 345 (Act 496), passed on March 29 2021. These employees are no longer entitled to compensation: Payout of Leave under Arkansas Code(s) A.C.A. 21-4-204 through 207: 21-4-404; and 21-4-501 through 505. See page 142 and 145 of ATU Staff Handbook. Requesting that employees affected by this change be grandfathered in to receive Payout of Leave upon retirement or death.

1. BACKGROUND

History

State of Arkansas, 93rd General Assembly, Regular Session, 2021 – Senate Bill 345 (Act 496). Certain job titles were changed from classified to non-classified under Arkansas Code 21-5-1406 (b). Job titles affected for ATU employees:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Computer Support Manager | HE Public Safety Commander III | Skilled Trades Foreman |
| Database Administrator | HE Public Safety Commander II | Skilled Trades Supervisor |
| Network Support Specialist | Public Safety Commander I | Skilled Tradesman |
| Systems Analyst | Public Safety Supervisor | Skilled Trades Helper |
| Computer Support Coordinator | Public Safety Officer | Apprentice Tradesman |
| Computer Operations Coordinator | Public Safety Officer II |  |
| Systems Coordination Analyst | Public Safety Security Officer | Website Developer |
| Computer Support Specialist | Computer Support Technician |  |
| Database Analyst | Information Systems Security Analyst |  |
| Network Support Analyst | Computer Operator |  |
| Call Center Specialist | Network Analyst |  |
| Information Systems Analyst |  |  |

**Employee Benefit Insurance Committee**

March 18, 2022

**Wellness Initiatives**

* The committee is considering implementing some type of wellness initiatives. Christina will see if someone from the Wellness sub-committee can attend our next meeting on April 1, 2022.
* The panel discussed the webinar presented by Stephens, “Leveraging Behavioral Economics to Improve Employee Wellness”.
  + Some take aways from the webinar included:
    - The use of the data/analytics and the use of demographic information to determine what wellness initiatives are recommended.
    - Tom pointed out that having a Self-Funded plan would enable us to have use of very specific data, that can be used to determine what initiatives to implement, as opposed to a fully insured plan like we currently have.
    - A targeted, personalized communication program is important to the success of any wellness intuitive.
    - Cost should be minimal
    - Stephens would provide recommendations for what types of wellness initiatives to implement after reviewing data.

**Subcommittee’s Retirement Review Update**

* The subcommittee met on March 2, 2022. Stephens has compiled a report after reviewing our retirement plan, and a quote to provide consulting services. This has been submitted to the Executive Committee. The quote included options to use their services one time, or as an ongoing service.

**Insurance Evaluation**

* Stephens presented a detailed timeline for the RFP for the self-funded insurance.

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

* The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, 4/1/2022 1:00 pm. At the next meeting we will discuss: Offering a Wellness Initiative, get the report from the Retirement Subcommittee, and see where we are with the Self-Funded RFP timeline.

**Committee Member**: (absent) Angela Bell, Cheryl Monfee, Dr. David Blackburn, (absent) Dr. Jamie Stacy, (absent) Bobby Sewell, (absent) Dr. David Ward, (absent) Dr. Jon Clements, Dr. Michael Davis, Leigh Hill, Linda Jones, Stacie Harden, (absent) Jami Fisher, Christina Stolarz. **Guest**: Margie Link

**Stephens Consulting** - Tom Kane, Tyler Runnells, Bobette Leggett, Maribel Rogers

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| --- | --- |
| **2022 ESTIMATED TIMETABLE OF SELF-FUNDED RFP PROCESS – Subject to change** Activity | Target Completion Date |
| Release of RFP for TPA & PBM | March 28, 2022 |
| Questions due from TPAs & PBMs | April 4, 2022 |
| Response to TPA questions due | April 7, 2022 |
| TPA and PBM Proposals/Quotes due | April 15, 2022 |
| Proposals Reviewed and Scored | April 18,2022 |
| Recommendations TPA/PBM Summary to Insurance Benefits Committee | April 29,2022 |
| Renewal received from BCBS | July 15, 2022 |
| RFP, Renewal and Claim History sent to Stop Loss Carriers | July 18, 2022 |
| Stop Loss/Quotes due | August 12, 2022 |
| Stop Loss quotes scored and reviewed | August 17, 2022 |
| Recommendation Summary to Insurance Benefits Committee | August 23, 2022 |
| Recommendations presented to Executive Committee | September, 2022 |
| Decision Made | No later than September 15, 2022 |
| Award letters to Carriers | September 16, 2022 |
| PBM/TPA/Stop Loss Implementation Begins (takes no less than 90 days) | September 16, 2022 |
| PlanSource Implementation Begins | September 20, 2022 |
| Benefit Guide Revision begins | September 20, 2022 |
| Open Enrollment Email notifications sent to staff | September 30, 2022 |
| Open Enrollment Begins | October 10, 2022 |

**Budget Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**March 4, 2022**

* + 1. Fee Sub-Committee Report (Dr. Jeffrey Cass)

Dr. Cass reported the fee sub-committee has recently met twice, and during the second of those meetings several fee recommendations that had come forth from the university community were approved to move forward for consideration by the full budget advisory committee. The fee sub-committee will continue to review proposed general fee increases in support of the operations of the health and wellness center and athletics.

* + 1. Campus Master Plan Update (Ms. Laury Fiorello)

Ms. Fiorello provided the budget advisory committee with an update on progress that has been made in support of the campus master plan. In-progress projects include the new campus entrance project, planning for a new student union and recreation center and re-purposing space in Dr. Robert Charles Brown and Jill Lestage Brown Hall for academic use. Completed projects include the demolition of the Stroupe Building, McEver Hall vent hood improvements, the purchase of additional farm land and the identification of a new home for the ATU Department of Public Safety.

* + 1. Five-Year Rolling Budget Model Update (Ms. Laury Fiorello)

Ms. Fiorello asked for feedback on the five-year rolling budget model as it stands at this time. Dr. John Jackson asked if the ongoing work on renewed recruitment and retention goals would be incorporated into the model. Ms. Fiorello responded they will be incorporated in conjunction with the finalization of goals. She said the recruitment and retention goals will be more likely to influence budget plans for fiscal year 2024 and beyond. Dr. Blake Bedsole passed forward Staff Senate concerns that had been expressed to him in terms of protecting affordability for students and remaining competitive in the marketplace. Ms. Fiorello expressed appreciation for that feedback and a desire to have further conversations with Staff Senate concerning the issue of tuition and fees. Ms. Fiorello and Dr. Cass both expressed appreciation for the feedback and the important role it plays in budget development. Dr. Robin E. Bowen emphasized the importance of pay increases for ATU faculty and staff and requested that be a priority when updating the five-year rolling budget model.

* + 1. Proposed One-Time Bonus – Current Fiscal Year (Ms. Laury Fiorello)

Ms. Fiorello said the university will consider a $1,000 one-time bonus for faculty and staff (classified and non-classified) near the end of fiscal year 2022. It would be inclusive of all campuses of Arkansas Tech. The ATU executive council has considered this proposal. One provision is that ATU executive council would be excluded from the bonus. Ms. Fiorello said the proposal will go before the Arkansas Tech Board of Trustees for its consideration during its March meeting. Dr. Bowen stated it has been a challenging period for ATU employees and the bonus, if approved and implemented, would be an appropriate thank you.

* + 1. Budget Calendar (Ms. Laury Fiorello)

Budget request submissions are due Tuesday, March 15. The fee sub-committee will meet on Thursday, March 10. The next meeting of the budget advisory committee is scheduled for Friday, March 18, at which time the committee will consider fee requests for fiscal year 2023. The fee sub-committee will meet on Thursday, April 14. The budget advisory committee will meet on Friday, April 29.

**Budget Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**March 18, 2022**

1. Upcoming Dates (Laury Fiorello)

The fee sub-committee will meet April 14 at 8:30 a.m. via Webex. The budget advisory committee will reconvene at 9 a.m. on April 29. Seeking a location that will facilitate in-person and Webex attendance options. The fee sub-committee will provide its final report inclusive of student semester credit hours fees at the April 29 meeting. The final meeting of the budget advisory committee in advance of the adoption of the fiscal year 2023 budget will be 9 a.m. on May 27.

1. Fee Sub-Committee Report (Laury Fiorello and Dr. Jeffrey Cass) Course fees are essentially finalized. Feedback concerning general fees such as health and wellness and athletics continues to be gathered.
2. Five-Year Model Summary (Laury Fiorello)

Ms. Fiorello presented background information relative to the budgetary impact of changes in enrollment, tuition and mandatory fees rates and expenses and how projected changes in those factors help build the annual budget for the university. The group engaged in conversations about the importance of maintaining competitive salaries in order to attract and retain quality faculty and staff while simultaneously maintaining affordability for students.