

Staff Senate Minutes

November 2, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

President Kristian Thompson called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Thursday November 2, 2023 at 8:59 a.m. in a hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual online meeting.

ROLL CALL

Senators Present:

Sabrina Anwar
Peggy Ayers
Rachel Broussard
Deidra Dillard
Slade Dupuy
Julie Ennis

Connie Herring
Kim Hilliard
Katie Hook
Kacie Lopez
Whitney Moore
Tanda Morrison

Cody Neal
Tammy Rye
Miranda Senn
Kristian Thompson
Scott Tomlin

Senators Absent:

Amber Jacimore

Krystal Manning

Visitor(s):

Alexis Scrimshire
Alisa Waniewski
Amanda Gardner
Amber Meeks
Angela Westbrook
Bethany Brown
Jennifer Taylor
Julia Pope
Justin Clark
Kaylin Telford
Kim McKown
Lisa Gibson
Mackenzie Bray

Marcia Brown
Mary McCoy
Meaghan Wilt
Michael Bradley
Michelle Price
Shawna Davis
Susan Johnson
Suzanne McCall
Tammy Weaver
Tanya Martin
Tanessa Robinson
Valli Wanzer
Victoria Tomlin

Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes from the October 12, 2023 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Tomlin filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Hilliard seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

Special Guest

Board of Trustee Member Bill Clary and Eclipse Committee Member Susan West.

Special Report

Mr. Bill Clary was the first of our guests to speak. Mr. Clary just wanted to come and formally introduce himself and show his support to Staff Senate. He spoke a little on his history with Tech and how much the university means to him.

He is excited about some of the changes that are currently taking place with Tech. He recognizes that we are having some financial difficulties but believes we can have that turned in the next few years. He believes there are some cultures that he hopes will change soon. For example, he hopes to see more promoting from within. So, all in all, Mr. Clary was just glad he was able to stop by and say hello and let us know that he supports us.

Our next special guest was Mrs. Susan West to talk about the upcoming eclipse, the plans that Tech are making, and answer questions.

The first major plan she wanted to share was our campus will be physically closed down starting at noon the Friday before the eclipse. Classes will be held online and those that are permitted by their supervisors, will work remotely. The staff and faculty that will be living on campus for the duration of the eclipse will start to move in that day.

Campus will be closed off to the public. There will be barricades put up and 5 points of entry that will be monitored by public safety. If you need to come to campus, you will be allowed in. Classes are NOT cancelled. Classes will be held virtually and unsynchronous. Holding classes synchronously would put too much pressure on our systems.

There are a few bits of information that are important for the community to know about for personal safety and protection. It is vital that you get all of your gas, groceries, medications, etc. in advance. We are expecting to have more than 3 times the number of people in town than we have on a regular, busy day. What we are going to experience is a total eclipse. It will be dark for about 4 and a half minutes around 1pm.

We will have NASA's communication crew on campus starting on Monday. The weather channel will most likely be on campus reporting on the eclipse. We have also applied for and secured a grant for \$50,000 to help purchase items that we need in order to protect our campus during this event. Our goal for this event is "To serve the students and survive the tourists." We will have public safety officers on the premises at all times. We are offering student organizations the opportunity to charge people for spots in advance.

In Kentucky, where a previous total eclipse occurred, people were stuck on the highway for 7 hours. Tech has secured 38 porta potties for this event. We are looking at securing software that allows us to charge the people coming in. We are renting out parking spots (prepaid). Jones 3rd floor will be housing NASA as well as a handful of French scientists. PBS will be on campus filming for a documentary. Where we normally park school busses, will be prepaid RV spots. Most of our spots will be day use spots but we also have spots for our special invited guests. Other universities have reached out asking if they can bring students.

For staff the biggest question is “will I be working online or do I need to be on campus?” This will be left up to supervisors’ discretion. The Eclipse Committee’s opinion is, the fewer people on campus, the better. Otherwise, that is one more person that could get sick or get in an accident or whatever. The biggest factor that will determine if you are on campus or not will be if you are deemed essential.

One big concern for employees working remotely is network throttling and compromised cell phone reception. Susan said that the city asked for an extra cell tower from Verizon and we were told no. However, as this event gets larger, they plan to ask again. So, the question has to be asked, will staff find themselves being required to take 3 days of annual leave because they were unable to work. This issue has not really been a topic of discussion because we are looking at other places that have experienced a total eclipse. There is a town in Kentucky that’s size is comparable to Russellville, that expected about 95,000 people to show up for their event. They had about 121,000 people show up and they had no disruptions to their cell coverage. Currently, we are not expecting staff to be unable to work from home due to network and cell coverage, at this time.

Once the new website rolls out, the hope is to get an eclipse page set up for frequently asked questions as well as who to contact in whatever type of situation. And, of course, public safety will be reachable and capable of handling emergency situations. There have been discussions of road closings. We are waiting on ARDOT to make a decision on what route to the hospital would be best. Restaurants will probably be running on a limited menu and Door Dash (and the likes) will probably not be running. There will still be food on campus for students and employees.

There will be eclipse merch at the bookstore. The money that we earn from renting spots, selling merch, etc. will first go to putting our campus back together. The board and VP’s will discuss and decide what to do with profit money once campus has been recovered.

Senate Discussion

We have our Admin and Finance vacancy still open. Bethany Brown and Jennifer Taylor have both accepted nominations to fill this spot. They are both in the Controller’s Office and there is a OneTech link posted so that you can cast your vote.

On a similar note, our new staff senate positions were approved by the board. This added two positions in Athletics and two positions in student affairs. So, the next step is to figure out if we want to start electing these positions now or wait until May when terms officially start. One concern for starting the positions now is we have had many seasons of elections and nominations lately. It could be argued that that could cause the community to be tired of electing employees. May is a natural coming and leaving time for our senators. This is not something that has to be decided now, just something to think about.

The Staff Senate survey committee has met and finalized the questions. They just need to have a quick meeting with Dr. Jones so he can look over the questions to make sure we are asking the questions that need to be asked. The biggest concern with this survey, is that we need to make sure that we are getting everyone that we can to take the survey. We need the good, the bad, and the ugly. We will be distributing the survey through Question Pro. There will be a link on OneTech to the website. We will also have paper ballots available to those that want them. The paper ballots can be turned into our Staff Senate box on the 1st floor of Brown (RCB).

Tailgating will be moved from Homecoming weekend to the following weekend. Everyone has a lot going on at Homecoming. This way things will be a little quieter and more senators will be able to participate. We will have food so bring your kids and come have fun.

December 5th at 3pm, Abby Davis is having a women's basketball game and is planning to host staff appreciation during that game. More details to come!

Concerns & Questions brought to Staff Senate

<p>Why are we taking out parts of the union that can actually bring us in revenue? The basketball courts and ballrooms mean we can host more camps and camps bring us money. If we are going to build the student union, shouldn't we just wait until we can do the building right and complete rather than pull pieces out of it and if feel unfinished?</p>	<p>The board has tabled the redesign while they are having discussion meetings with students, as they are being involved in the final meeting. They will meet with the students on November 10th. However, when the design of the building was created, the advent of possibility for external revenue generation was calculated to be a minimum transaction. Students will have 1st rights to schedule events in the building rather than events like camps. Not that camps cannot be scheduled there but they will not, and have not, been the priority for the building. We are always open to new revenue streams and will still have the currently used areas for camps active. We don't see where reducing the courts to 2 rather than 3 would prevent camps being held, if scheduling permitted.</p>
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Meeting Adjourned

President Thompson asked if there were any motions to adjourn the meeting. Senator Ayers made the motion and Senator Neal seconded and the meeting was dismissed.

Respectfully submitted,
Whitney Moore, Secretary