Staff Senate Minutes

February 10, 2022

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**ROLL CALL**

**Senators Present:**

Angie Bell

Rachel Broussard  
Judy Crouch  
Deidra Dillard

Cynthia Dixon   
Brandi Duvall   
Cole Hendrix  
Cindy Hubbard  
Susan Johnson  
Margie Link  
Teresa Lutz  
Krystle Manning   
Kim McKown

Amber Meeks  
Cody Parsons

Lydia Rogers  
Tammy Rye  
Thomas Strahan  
Jamie Young

**Senators Absent:**

Lyndsay Simpson

**Visitor(s):**

Dr. Naquindra Brooks

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the January 6, 2022 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Dixon filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Strahan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

**Special Report**

Ms. Laury Fiorello:

* Discussion of summer hours and how they were handled in the past. We need to make a fairly quick decision, not us as a group, but the institution will need to consider if we’re going to do that again and if so, there was two different versions to consider. One option was that offices would be open five day; offices would work four 9-hour days and 4 hours on Friday. Second option was to work a four day work week and having Fridays closed. Staff Senate needs to get feedback from staff and bring that discussion to EC meeting on Wednesday, February 16, 2022. The institution has not decided on option A or B, it is in the discussion phase. Since it’s in the discussion phase, this is a prime time to get feedback. Last year (Summer 2021) I believe we worked 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (9 hour work days) with half day on Friday. The other option that came up is a 4-day work week. I wanted the opinion of the group, if that was an option that was every proposed. Do not have to make a decision right now, we can continue to discuss.
* Discussion from Staff Senate: Could departments do something outside of the 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.? It would have to be approved. Is there an option to do virtual Fridays if we did a half day on Friday? Everyone working virtually on Fridays could have a cost savings to the university. Summer camps was brought up in the discussion and how that would work with summer hours. Summer hours may not prove to support some of the camps. Other areas may be impacted by summer hours, as well. A comment from the chat room, that some departments have only one admin, and they need to be able to meet student and faculty departmental needs. Some concerns that summer hours may not be standard across all areas.
* Strategic Plan – There is a lot of backup material that needs to be scrutinized and positively looked at to get participatory input on the next strategic plan. There is an email that provides several documents to read at your leisure and a feedback form. The feedback form is very, very important because this is our strategic plan. It’s important to get everyone’s participation going forward because this is the document will guide us through the next three years. Be discussing with you individually, but I wanted to bring up here in the staffs in it as well and let everybody be aware of. Note: Rachel Broussard is the staff senate representative on the Strategic Plan Committee.
* Arkansas Technical Institute (ATI), non-formula entity, will provide career counseling and micro credential career counseling. ATU has applied for a $4 million grant. This function will not have an impact on our regular budget, it is a separate grant. Will be the start of a long chain of events that we can provide as an institution. We pride ourselves that we could go from a micro credential, welding certificate (as an example) all the way to a doctoral degree. Groundbreaking micro credentials, such as a certification to get started in someone’s education or they could use it to get a certification to go right to work in welding.
* Discussion from Staff Senate: What are the staffing needs for the program? Chancellor Sikes is spearheading the project. We could have Chancellor Sikes debrief staff senate. There will be a director of the program and there will be career counselors. Not sure when or how many, at this point. What will recruiting the staff look like? Will go through the HR process, just like any funded position at the university. Will the $4 million be part of the new fiscal 2022-2033 year? Once ADHE accepts and approves the MOU and our proposal then the $4 million can take effect. Since it is a separate grant from the regular budget, we don’t have to wait until July. The $4 million is not part of the discussion of what we consider the working budget.
* Budget Advisory Committee document: This is a proposal, this is not a final document. For the new year, keep in mind that we have a 5 year model that has rolled up numbers. What this means is that salary and benefits are their own separate lines, but there are not numbers by each individual department yet. Right now these are assumptions that will need feedback. Fall 2021 was down roughly 11%. We have a goal for Fall 2022 that would bring that down to 7%. The new freshman goal is 1,189. We are also mechanizing a goal to keep the freshman coming back. It won’t brink back 100% of enrollment, but it will bring back some. Also, increasing transfers in and graduate students. So with these three components, estimating a 7.57% decrease in overall enrollment from 2022 fiscal budget to 2023 fiscal budget. Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase of 2.83%. That’s an average that is in the media right now. May be one of the components that will have to be adjusted because of inflation. One of the most complicated things to the project is health insurance. Budgeting for a 10% increase right now. In the assumptions, we have a 2% overall tuition and fee average increase. Consider an enrollment contingency if enrollment fluctuates and we have reserve funds set aside in a budget line item instead of impacting individual budgets. This budget line item is approximately $1 million. Also, proposing a 2% increase in professional and classified salaries. These assumptions and proposals are for fiscal year 2023. We do have a 5-year model. Have to do a logical assumption and carry those numbers forward. So for fiscal years 2024-2026, we’re going to keep the decline in enrollment.
* Budget Advisory Committee continued: This is just a snapshot of initial assumptions, these are not finalized. So, yes, the discussion needs to arise over how we want to offset those future years. The governor did grant ATU a base increase in our funding. It is about $2.5 or $2.7 million that we will get this year. That is the reason for the 1% or 2% increase in salaries. This increase could also decrease the burden on the students with a 2% instead of 3% increase in tuition and fees. Fiscal year 2023 and 2024 are good, but 2025 and beyond, will have consider possible changes because of ongoing costs, for example, CPI, salaries and benefits. We have some flexibility in 2% or 3% increase in tuition and fees, but discussion needs to be contemplated and understood that this will increase tuition. It’s a delicate balancing what we choose to do and what is. The 5-year model plan is kind of a worst case scenario situation. It will depend on enrollment.
* Discussion: Will non-classified staff receive an increase of any type? Yes, professional is considered unclassified professional. Do we have data on students’ barrier to entry is? Why is enrollment declining? Do we have existing or recruiting date to know what’s preventing employees from coming or what’s causing employees to leave? In analysis, what goes up also goes down. Those are the two things swirling around the university is employee retention and acquisition and student retention and acquisition. What are the challenges each area is having. Recommendation – Have enrollment management come to a staff senate meeting and also Mr. Wyatt Watson to discuss predictors.

**Committee Reports**

* **President’s Communication-** No report
* **Budget Advisory –** No report
* **COVID Taskforce-**
* **Scholarship –** No report
* **University Strategic Planning** – No Report
* **Insurance Committee –** Report attached
* **IT Prioritization and Impact** – No Report Meeting on Feb. 15, update at March meeting.
* \**University Communication Working Group –** No report
* **Campus Space and Utilization –** No report
* **Staff Awards –** No report
* **Special Projects/Events-** No report

A staff senate member asked about the committees. They had not been assigned or ask to volunteer to serve on a committee. There was a note on the President’s notes that there needed to be notes from the committees or noted that No report for that month. Check to see if Institutional Effectiveness Committee still meets.

**New Business**

*Notes and comments concerning meeting with Dr. Bowen* - Do we need to hire a Chief Diversity Officer? Right now, there is only staff member in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Naquindra Brooks. In the strategic plan there is inclusive excellence and what’s being attempted. Dr. Brooks was asked her opinion on having a Chief Diversity Officer. She indicated that we do need a senior level position. In institution, similar to ATU, they have a centralized office with a team. She does have a GA, but there is more work than just two people can handle. To promote and foster inclusive excellence, other schools have individual staff that are just for students, faculty, and staff. She said that for an institution the size of ATU the Diversity and Inclusion Office should have 6 or 7 employees. Dr. Brooks was curious as to why some people didn’t think is was important to have a Chief Diversity Officer. It’s not that the staff don’t think it’s important, they are just not sure about hiring another high level staff member that just oversees an office. There is a real need for someone to help Dr. Brooks with the work load. Difficult decisions and choices had to be made in budget cuts, but what message is being sent to cut an office that is already short-staffed? Is it more important to have a staffed office of diversity and inclusion or spend budget money on another office deemed more important?

<https://www.atu.edu/diversity/docs/Strategic%20Plan%20for%20Inclusive%20Excellence%20FINAL%20DRAFT.pdf>

*Continuing notes and comments concerning meeting with Dr. Bowen* – Mental health ideas. Staff senate agreed that they were good ideas, but wondered who had time to engage in these activities, such as yoga. Most of the staff have increased workloads and would like to do some of the activities, but don’t feel they have the time. Dr. Bowen did allow February 03 and 04 for snow days. Staff did not have to work virtually those days.

*Discussion from Staff Senate* – Not able to make a decision on items discussed. We need to know barriers to entry for students and barriers to entry for staff. Staff was left out of the meeting. We are presented with something from EC and it always seems to be urgent. When Staff Senate is given tasks, there are roadblocks associated with them. Dr. Brooks mentioned inclusive excellence. Inclusive excellence is a huge part of recruitment and retention. As a campus, how are we doing to move towards this? Going forward how do we address this. In 2025 and 2026 we’re going to have a shortfall. How do we address these things and address them as a whole? It’s crucial for us to talk about this as a group. EC wants feedback, but do we move forward with assumptions. How can we make well rounded decisions for the people we represent, on this campus? Need a faculty representative in staff senate meetings. Would faculty be kind enough to give staff senate some direction when it is needed, along with opinions and some directives? Staff feels like an under represented body on this campus. Can more staff attend Faculty Senate meetings. Feels like we are missing some important conversations by not attending.

There’s some camaraderie and some teamwork missing with the Webex meetings. Are we at a point we could move face to face? Webex is convenient and easy. When we do start having Staff Senate meetings face to face again, we still need the Webex component. Some staff are not able to leave their offices. We don’t want to exclude anyone.

Employee Appreciation Day – Question was asked if there is a budget. There is not a budget. Asked if we could have time off? Most likely answer is no. Supervisors still have the option to grant employees, in their departments, 16 hours virtual work, per month. Another option suggested was a meal voucher. so employees could use it when it was convenient for them. Departmental lunches were also suggested. If the departments can lock their doors for just an hour so that employees can have lunch together without have to cover for the office. Maybe student workers could cover the offices so employees can have lunch together and enjoy the camaraderie. Not all offices have student workers and lots of deans and department heads would not be happy with a locked door.

Ask if anyone would be willing to take notes from the Presidential Communication Committee Meetings. The Presidential Communication Committee Meetings are through Webex, but are not recorded. Rachel Broussard volunteered to take notes.

Collegiality – Definition is for faculty, not sure how it relates to staff. What Dr. Bowen wanted to know if staff can adopt collegiality and have it university wide. Question was asked if Dr. Bowen was asking for this specifically or because the AGB report. Answer was because of the AGB report. Staff versus faculty. Can staff be collegial without being congenial? There are going to problems when we stop being convenient to each other. There is a debate that happens with faculty that doesn’t necessarily happen with staff. What about service excellence? Can you give excellent customer service with being congenial? Because service excellence is respectful, knowledgeable, helpful, and professional. Staff doesn’t have the option to debate and only be collegial.

**Old Business**

*Be the Match Bone Marrow Donor Drive-* Bone Marrow Drive – Get Swabbed Event with the Earl Young Foundation. President Link has a phone call with Mr. Young on 02-11-2022. We want Student Activities Board (SAB) involved to help get the word out. Date is set for April 14, 2022. Will ask Laury Fiorello if there is a budget for the Bone Marrow Drive.

**Open Forum/Announcements**

Could a speed bump be put on West M Street? Those working at Williamson have expressed concern with pulling out with the way cars are parked on the street. People speed though there. An email was sent to Chief McMillan. Vice President Rye was going to reach out to Chief McMillan to get some feedback. Senator Hendrix said that at one time they were discussing speed bumps through that area. There were budget constraints. There are issues in that part of campus; speeding, how cars are parked, students walking with earpods. There will be some changes with the new plaza going in. There will be road closures, not sure how that would affect M street.

Announcement by Senator Young – One Stop Shop is holding focus groups for students who face barriers, for instance, retention. Also, if anyone ideas how to increase recruitment and enrollment, send them her way.

**Next Meeting**

Thursday, March 03, 2022, 10 a.m. vis WebEx

**Meeting Adjourned**

Senator Hendrix filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Duvall seconded the motion. The Senate voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,   
Lyndsay Simpson, Secretary



**Employee Benefit Insurance Committee**

January 28, 2022

**Announcing New Chair**

* We are so happy to welcome Alisha Nix as our new committee Chair! Thank you for agreeing to serve!

**Claims vs. Premium Report/Update**

* Stephens consultants presented an overview of the claims & premiums report. They also reviewed the high claims report: 11 Individuals out of 1500 total in the plan, make up 38% of the total claims cost. Higher pharmaceutical cost is the fastest growing claims cost.
* The Stephens team will research how many of the high claims are on the HSA plan, based on a question asked by the committee. They indicated they could also review if the plan is priced appropriately.
* The committee discussed implementing some type of wellness initiatives that we would want to consider offering or implementing. Christina was going to find out if someone from the Wellness sub-committee could come to our next meeting.
* Stephens will be hosting a Panel discussion on Health economics. They will be inviting the entire committee to attend, so that we can understand the underlying factors before going forward establishing our own wellness initiatives.

**Subcommittee’s Retirement Review Update**

* The subcommittee has met and reviewed with a Stephens consultant on our TIAA plan. The consultant listed some recommendations for ATU to consider. The subcommittee is doing research on these recommendations to make some official recommendations to the full committee. The subcommittee will be meeting again on March 2nd.

**Insurance Evaluation**

* We would like to start our evaluation earlier next year so that we can truly dive into reviewing the possibility of self-insurance and other benefits available.
* At our October meeting, Stephens presented on Self-Funded Insurance 101 to help with everyone’s understanding. A copy of the presentation and the recording of this meeting was emailed to everyone.
* Stephens will provide a detailed timeline for the RFP for the self-funded insurance to the group at our next meeting.

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

* The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 25 at 1:00 pm. And, then every two weeks thereafter. At the next meeting we will discuss: Offering a Wellness Initiative and where we are with the Self-Funded RFP process. Stephens will update us on their findings regarding high claims in the HSA plan.

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

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