

STAFF SENATE

August 9, 2019

Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The Ozark Campus Staff Senate was called to order on Friday, August 9, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in Conference Room 137 in the Ozark Health Science and Wellness Building.

ROLL CALL

Senators Present:

Mike Bogue

Peter Clifton

Alina House

Jennifer Thomas

Erin Brickley

Senators Absent: Julie Schmalz

Visitors: None

MINUTES: The minutes from the July 3, 2019 Senate meeting were distributed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Senator Thomas, seconded by Senator Clifton, and all approved, motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Report from President's Communication Committee:** President Bogue attended on Tuesday, July 30, 2019 at 3:30 PM.
- **Dr. Bowen** introduced four new members, including Ms. Sheila Jacobs, the new Chief Academic Officer for the Ozark Campus, then asked for Level 5, 4, and 3 communications (5 = important to all; 4 = important to many; 3 = important to some), and received the following reports:
- **Tammy Weaver (Registrar)** – Ms. Weaver said ATU graduation (both campuses) will be on 8-10-19 and will be for 1399 degrees. These include 678 Associate's degrees and 86 Master's degrees.
- **Bob Freeman (Human Resources Director)** – Employment performance reviews (by both employee and supervisor) for the 2018-2019 fiscal year are due 7-31-19.
- **A friendly reminder will be sent to all employees and/or supervisors who have not completed their reviews.**
- **Kevin Solomon (Campus Life Director)** – New Student Orientation (Main Campus only) will begin on Saturday, August 17. 1500 new students are expected to show up that day and move into residence halls.

- **Josh McMillan (Public Safety Director)** – Student hangtags will be on sale starting August 1 and will be purchased online. The cost per hangtag is \$45 (Main Campus only).
- **Bryan Fisher (Vice President for Advancement)** – Funding takes place each fiscal year from June 1 through July 31. For the now ending fiscal year, Advancement received over \$6 million in donations. Also, a new campaign has started – “**19 of the last 9.**” This would consist of 19 graduates (either campus) from the last 9 years who have made outstanding contributions to their field and/or community; Tech faculty and staff may nominate any graduate from the last 9 years they think would qualify. The deadline for nominations is the end of August.
- **Sam Strasner (Director of University Relations President's Office)** - New rankings on study.com indicate that Tech is the nation’s #2 institution to offer affordable online learning options.
- **Lou Ann Reeves (Russellville Campus Staff Senate President)** – Russellville Campus Staff Senate elections will soon take place; there will be 13 openings for new senators. Nominations will take place September 1-13.
- **Dr. Robin Bowen, Arkansas Tech President** –
 - On August 1, the new academic calendar will be ready.
 - On August 14, there will be a lunch for faculty and staff (Main Campus only) from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 - Dr. Bowen’s “Back to School” Address will take place on Monday, August 19, at 1:30 in Doc Bryan Hall. Dr. Barbara Johnson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, will also speak.
 - The address will be live-streamed (presumably to the Ozark Campus, but this was not clear).
 - Governor’s School (Main Campus only) has gone well and concludes Saturday, August 3.

Small Group Activity –

Dr. Bowen instructed those present to break up into five groups, and gave each group three tasks:

- Come up with various ways ATU communicates (to both students and colleagues).
- Come up with the three most effective ways ATU Communicates (to both students and colleagues).
- Come up with how to improve ATU campus communications.
- Come up with one current ineffective ATU communication method.

When the five groups combined their three most effective ATU communication methods, they came up with the following 8 methods:

| | |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| OneTech | ATU Website |
| Texting | Staff Meetings |
| Email | Phone Calls |
| Jabber | Face-to-Face Communications |

Three basic methods that might unify ATU communications:

- Make sure all faculty and staff have access to all communication systems (faculty in Witherspoon Hall do not have access to Jabber).
- When staff or faculty log in, the screen by default goes to OneTech first so all can see the announcements.
- An app that features both wide access (items pertaining to everyone) and filtered access (items pertaining to only specific departments/units/campuses).

For the least effective ATU communication method, both Onetech and the ATU Calendar were major contenders.

- **Report from Russellville Staff Senate Meeting:** July 10, 2019

Old Business:

- **Committee Updates-** The following updates were given on current committees:
 - Insurance- No update
 - Marijuana-No update.
 - Diversity- Work is done. Report is in finalization stage and will be sent out when available.
 - Free Speech- No update.
 - Staff Handbook- Will meet Friday July 12, 2019 jointly with Mr. Pennington and Ozark Staff Senate representatives to go over draft copy returned from HR.
 - Official Function- No update.

Note: President Reeves informed Senate members she did receive a flow chart on the policy approval process from Ms. Hinkle. The flow chart will be emailed to senators. Also, Ms. Hinkle will be providing the Senate a couple of new policies to look over in the near future.

- **Tuition Waiver Proposed Changes-** The new tuition waiver policy went into effect January 2019. The following changes have been suggested below:
 - Change the submission date to the 11th day of class instead of the 1st day of class. Many employees and dependents have to make changes during the first week. The 11th day of class is standard for other waivers, scholarships, etc.
 - Change the maximum hours for graduate degrees to 9 additional hours above published degree requirement instead of a cap of 40 hours. Some graduate degrees such as the counseling program requires 45 hours. This means an employee or dependent cannot use the waiver benefit for their entire degree plan.
 - Implement an appeals process for the payback of tuition due to dropped classes other than the two reasons below:
 - The current policy from a BOT trustees meeting was mentioned and the only two appeals allowed are as follows:
 - Mis-advising- The advisor advised the student to take the incorrect course and the student dropped the course.
 - Medical Reason.

- President Reeves opened the Senate Floor for discussion on the proposed changes. The following items were discussed:
 - What if a student changes the graduate degree choice? If there is no cap on hours, then which degree plan do you apply the nine additional hours to?
 - There needs to be at least one or two courtesy drops for waiver participants.
 - The waiver was supposed to be a benefit and now the new rules are punishing employees and dependents for trying to take classes if they have to drop one.
 - Many employees take jobs at ATU just for the benefit of the children getting to attend college at a discounted price. Some freshman and even older students have to drop maybe just one class, and they should not be punished the first time.
 - This policy makes it harder on the employee. If an employee has good intentions and enrolls in a course and then two months later people quit in their office and they can no longer handle the coursework of their class and their extra job duties they are either required to continue with the class and make a failing grade or drop and pay back the tuition even though it is no fault of their own.
 - Most employees would not even be able to pay back the tuition because they do not get paid enough at their jobs.
 - Ms. Hinkle did suggest to make a cap of maximum hours instead of the additional 9 hours to make the process easier on OIS and the electronic system.
 - The appeals process would require many departments to work together to find out a way to track a courtesy drop or a regular drop. This could be a difficult practice to track and inform students of.

President Reeves tabled the discussion until the next meeting due to time constraints. Ms. Hinkle advised President Reeves to provide her with a final document of proposed changes when available and she will take to the EC for approval.

- **Communication Items-** President Reeves opened up the senate floor for senators to voice concerns from their departments on the following issues:
 - Staff Appreciation Night and Staff Picnic:
 - The picnic is good, but the ballgame night is a burden.
 - Need new food items at the picnic, not just hot dogs.
 - Seek donations for door prizes at the ballgame night.
 - Have a sno-cone truck at the events.
 - Give out award certificates at the Staff Picnic.
 - Gift Certificates to the cafeteria would be better for staff members to use on their own time.
 - Spring Break day off:
 - Keep Birthday instead of using it for Friday of Spring Break.
 - Morale:
 - There is no additional compensation for getting a good evaluation for non-classified employees. There is no penalty for a bad evaluation, but then there is also no incentive for doing your job well. Classified employees get

merit bonuses, when approved, based on evaluation results, but this does not apply to non-classified.

- Ms. Hinkle did remind senate members although there were no bonuses given, a 1% raise went into effect July 1, 2019.
 - There is currently no promotion program at ATU. An employee who has been here for 17 years never gets an increase in pay except for COLA.
 - An HR representative on the Senate noted that ATU does not have a step up policy for employees.
 - Ms. Hinkle explained classified positions are governed by the State. Some positions were moved up in pay but only because of the minimum wage change.
 - Morale is down because an employee who has been here 14 years is now making the same as an employee who just started in custodial services due to the minimum wage changes.
 - Bonuses are needed.
 - Better pay is needed.
- Communication:
- Offices are short staffed therefore it is almost impossible to have office meetings anymore. The communication within an office is not great when people are overworked.
 - The information from the Presidents Communication Committee is not being reported very well.
 - Meetings need to be livestreamed for people who cannot leave their offices.
 - Post available jobs on a One-Tech announcement so current employees know to apply.
 - Why are jobs being posted without the pay showing?
 - After further investigation it was noted that classified positions are posted with pay amounts, but non-classified and faculty positions are left up to the departments to decide.
 - Available jobs are not synced correctly on the employee tab on OneTech and the HR website. For example, an employee looked at available positions on her employee tab of OneTech and there were three open positions shown. Then, she went to the HR website and there were five available positions shown.
 - The senate was reminded to please report all issues you find to HR so they can be fixed immediately.
 - Current employees applying through OneTech is easier as it automatically fills in information for you as you apply.
- **Pending Communication Items-** The following items are still pending and no new updates were given:
 - Ms. Hinkle- Picnic Table Requests, Gravel Walkway, Staff Awards, and Constitutional Amendments.
 - Mr. Pennington- Official Function and Free Speech.

New Business

- **Russellville Senate Elections-** President Reeves sent an email informing senators of who they currently represent, and a handout was given showing the representation areas with a ratio of 20 employees to 1 senator. The following items below were discussed, voted on, and approved:
 - Employees under a specific Vice President will vote on their area only. For example, employees who are under the Vice President of Academic Affairs will nominate and vote for the employees in their area. Not a campus wide vote for the openings.
 - Employee nominations will be accepted if the current employee is employed in the open VP area no matter the department area.
- **Feedback from Staff Senate Online Website Form-** The following items were submitted via the online form and discussed:
 - An employee asked why the resumes of candidates were not posted until the day of the open forums. This does not give employees much time to look over before the forums.
 - President Reeves asked Ms. Hinkle to clarify the reason for this. Ms. Hinkle explained this practice is a courtesy for the privacy of the candidates. Some candidates do not want to go public with their job search as they may have current jobs. The public naming of candidates is left private until necessary.
 - An employee asked why certain departments (Custodial Services) must have their departments on the back of their ATU T-Shirts. Why can't the shirt just say Staff? Why do certain departments have to be singled out? It makes some employees feel uncomfortable.
 - President Reeves was unsure how to approach the complaint as this seemed like more of a departmental issue than a Senate issue.
 - An employee stated the cafeteria is disgusting and the food is gross, and ATU needs to re-evaluate their contract with Chartwells.

Announcements

- President Reeves reminded Senate members and to remind those that they represent that the Senate is not a grievance committee. Some issues are not able to be solved on the senate floor, and must be taken to the supervisor of the particular department. Many issues presented to the Senate are departmental issues which the Senate is not able to handle.

Next Meeting:

August 7, 2019, 10:00 -12:00 in Doc Bryan 180.

- **Report from Russellville Staff Senate Meeting:** August 7,2019

Old Business:

- **Committee Updates-** The following updates were given on current committees:
 - Insurance- BCBS looking at 24% increase. Other insurance companies are being looked at. Any changes would happen in January 2020. Open Enrollment occurs in November 2019.
 - Marijuana-No update.
- **Picnic Table:** A picnic table has been moved nearby the RCB building.
- **Gravel Walkway:** Ms. Hinkle is in the process of releasing funds to pave the gravel walkway. The estimate at this time is \$4,700.00
- **Custodial Shirts:** President Reeves reached out to the appropriate supervisors and determined the shirts labeled “Custodial Services” are meant to be used as identifying custodial employees entering offices. Other staff members are asking if the shirts could just say “Staff” instead of Custodial. President Reeves will look into the issue more.
- **Tuition Waiver Proposed Changes-** The new tuition waiver policy went into effect January 2019. The following changes have been suggested below:
 - Change the submission date to the 11th day of class instead of the 1st day of class.
 - Change the maximum hours for graduate degrees to a 45 hour cap.
 - Implement an appeals process for the payback of tuition due to dropped classes for the two reasons below.
 - The current policy from a BOT trustees meeting was mentioned and the only two appeals allowed are as follows:
 - Mis-advising- The advisor advised the student to take the incorrect course and the student dropped the course.
 - Medical Reason.

The Senate passed a motion to send changes to Executive Council for approval.

- **Pending Communication Items-** The following items are still pending and no new updates were given:
 - Ms. Hinkle- Staff Awards, and Constitutional Amendments.
 - Mr. Pennington- Staff Handbook, Official Function, and Free Speech.

New Business

- **Russellville Senate Elections-** 13 open spots. Nominations will be held September 2-13, 2019. New term will begin in October.
- **Scholarship:** The Faculty/Staff Scholarship is now live and the deadline to apply is August 15, 2019. Apply through the Foundation on OneTech.

- **Dr. Jenkins Green and Gold Cupboard:** Dr. Jenkins congratulated the Russellville Staff Senate on donated 309 lbs. of food for the cupboard in one week. Dr. Jenkins believed it would be beneficial for a member from the Staff Senate to serve on the board for the Green and Gold Cupboard. Possibly a one to two year appointment.

President Reeves asked the senate if they believed a position was needed. The senate agreed a position was needed and President Reeves decided to wait until October to introduce the new opportunity to new senators as well.

- **Crosswalk:** A complaint was brought to the Senate about the diagonal crosswalk from the Brown building to the Robert Charles Brown Building. The crosswalk is very long, and very hard to see students entering the crosswalk especially with busy traffic.
 - Chief McMillian said the crosswalk must stay, and the senate asked if the crosswalk could be identified better such as a flashing sign.
- **Feedback from Staff Senate Online Website Form-** The following items were submitted via the online form and discussed:
 - Why did the Career Service increases not go into effect on July 1, 2019 since it was approved on April 1, 2019?
 - President Reeves researched the topic and found that although the new law did pass on April 1, 2019. The law did not take effect until July 24, 2019.
 - Can a hangtag be moved between different vehicles or is it tied to the make and model you put on your registration form?
 - President Reeves did confirm with public safety that hangtags can be transferred to different vehicles. Chris Pearson with Public Safety also mention your hangtag is tied to your T-Number so it does not matter what vehicle it is on they will be able to contact you.

Open Forum: The senate floor was open to any new discussions:

- A senate member brought forward a complaint that the Staff Handbook has still not been updated. Especially the grievance policy which currently says all grievances must first be taken to the supervisor, but what if the grievance is with the supervisor? The staff member also asked why student employees such as work study and graduate assistants are not covered in the Staff Handbook.
 - President Reeves advised the employee that the Staff Handbook is still in progress but many changes have been made including the grievance policy. Also, she advised the staff member that students must following the student handbook, and graduate students must follow their handbook.
- A staff member would like signs to be added to the inside of the elevators in RCB building. The signs in the hallway are not well placed.

- A Staff member would like the option of the hangtag price to be taken out of their check over the year. President Reeves will check into this again.
- A staff member provided a list of ideas to help with Staff morale that she had experienced in her past jobs.
 - Free Parking Hangtags as an option- At her past job she was able to have a reserved parking space for \$100.00 or general parking for free.
 - Flex Time in Summers- Either work staggered hours in departments or close campus on Fridays and work 10 hour days.
 - 30 minute lunch option- Able to take a 30 minute lunch to leave 30 minutes early to workout.
 - Health Benefits: Use Campus health facilities. At SAU, employees are allowed to use the campus health facilities and the facility charges their insurance. The co-pay was waived and insurance paid the university.

Next Meeting:

September 4, 2019, 10:00 -12:00 in Doc Bryan 180. (Minutes Pending)

Ozark Campus Meeting:

NEW BUSINESS

- **Birthday Cards:** Cards were presented for September Staff Birthdays to be signed and delivered.
- **Employee Spotlight:** Kristie Moore was drawn as the September Employee Spotlight.
- **Dr. Bowen on Campus August 19,2019.**
- Faculty & Staff Scholarship for \$500.00, application is on the Foundation website, deadline is August 15, 2019.

OLD BUSINESS

- **New Policy/Committees Update:** Staff Handbook went to Executive Counsel and revisions will need to be made and meet again the following Thursday August 15, 2019
- **Staff Professional Development:** Upward Bound-Green Zone Training in Russellville, Ozark Campus expressed interest in adopting as well.
- **Staff Potlucks:** The next Staff Senate Potluck is scheduled for September 27th @ 8:00 a.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Faculty In-service is August 15th and August 16th on the Ozark Campus
- State of the Campus with Mr. Sikes is August 15, 2019 at 8:45 AM.

GOOD AND WELFARE

The Staff Senate monthly meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2019 @ 9:00 AM in HSW 137.

ADJOURNMENT

Senator Clifton motioned, Senator Brickley seconded, and all approve and motion carried to adjourn at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Alina House, Secretary