

STAFF SENATE

Friday June 7, 2019

Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The Ozark Campus Staff Senate was called to order on Friday, June 7, 2019 at 9:03 a.m. in Conference Room 137 in the Ozark Health Science and Wellness Building

ROLL CALL

Senators Present:

Jennifer Thomas
Mike Bogue

David Spicer
Julie Schmalz

Senators Absent:

Erin Brickley

Stacie Harden

Ex-Officio Absent:

Beverly Nehus

MINUTES: The minutes from the May 2019 meeting were disbursed. A motion to approve the minutes with corrections was made by Senator Schmalz and seconded by Senator Bogue, and all approved, motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Report from President's Communication Committee:** President Spicer was not able to attend the meeting therefore, notes were not provided.
- **Report from Russellville Staff Senate:** Senator Thomas gave a report from the June 5, 2019 Russellville Staff Senate meeting on the following items:

New Business

- Vacancy on Senate- Chelsea Martin
 - There are no alternates at this time available to serve. Find out whom Chelsea represented and inform the group of another senator who could represent them until election in October. Will keep posted on this issue.
- Staff Senate Goals:
 - Improve Communication
 - Improve representation on committees
- Complaints brought to the Senate Floor from online form
 - An employee asked about more bicycle racks on campus. Riding you bicycle to work is better for your health, but there is limited availability to park your bike.
 - President Reeves talked to Procurement and they do plan to purchase more bike racks for the university in the future.
 - An employee asked if there could be more Supervisor training on timesheet approval and evaluation completions. These are not being completed in a timely manner.

- President Reeves spoke with Mr. Freeman on these issues, and he informed President Reeves a HR announcement was sent out with instructions and more information on evaluations on OneTech.
 - An employee asked if Excel training could be offered to improve their performance at their job.
 - President Reeves mentioned there is a course available for Excel at ATU, but training sessions could be discussed and possibly arranged but it may cost money. Another senator suggested using YouTube tutorials to learn more about Excel.
 - ADHE approved a 2% COLA but ATU is only offering a 1% COLA. Why is this? In addition, merit raises were approved but ATU did not choose to implement. Why?
 - President Reeves did not receive the complaint in time to fully research but did explain due to budget restrictions and increase in career service pay, ATU's budget is very tight.
- Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle took the floor to speak to the Senate about the following issues:
 - Dr. Bowen thanked the Senate for their service and wanted to let members know she respects their input and opinions.
 - Dr. Bowen mentioned the results of the Staff Senate Survey, which were shared with her by President Reeves. She discussed the top three issues with Senate members. Please see discussion items below:
 1. Communication- Dr. Bowen is aware that effective communication is not occurring even with the President's Communication Committee meetings. She asked Staff Senate members to please submit ideas on how to address this issue.
 - Dr. Bowen announced Ms. Hinkle would be the Staff Senate Liaison for Executive Council. For example, The Faculty Senate's liaison on the EC is the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Staff Senate was lacking a representative. Now the Staff Senate will have direct representation on the Executive Council through Ms. Hinkle. Ms. Hinkle accepted the task, and looks forward to working with President Reeves.
 - A senate member asked how committees were formed around campus. Dr. Bowen announced when a committee is needed within EC the faculty and staff senates are asked to volunteer representatives. She said she was not sure about other committees other than the permanent standing committees stated in the Faculty Handbook such as Curriculum committee, although Dr. Bowen said she did not know of any standing staff committees she would support standing committees for Staff Senate if they were needed.
 - A senate member asked specifically about the tuition wavier policy committee. Dr. Bowen explained those members were formed by HR, faculty senate, and staff senate. After some discussion, it was then established the staff senate member on the committee rolled off the

senate but remained on the committee, but did not report to the senate floor on any changes. Dr. Bowen apologized for this lack of communication and Ms. Hinkle volunteered to ask Bob Freeman to come explain the new changes in the waiver policy to staff.

- Ms. Hinkle also mentioned there is a flow chart of how policies must be approved. She will share with President Reeves as soon as she can.
 - A Senate member also mentioned that staff should have been notified that merit bonuses would not be happening this year since some staff depend on those bonuses.
2. Low Staff Morale- The results from the survey showed that the staff are not happy, and some of the ways from the past staff senate Presidents were to offer Staff picnics or staff appreciation nights at a ball game. Dr. Bowen asked the Senate to see if these events were still effective or if they need to be discontinued. She also asked for more ideas to increase morale for Staff.
- A suggestion was made by a staff member to allow certain staff who have worked for ATU a certain amount of time to be allowed time off without having to take leave or docked pay. For example as an appreciation for our staff who have worked 5 years at ATU you get 4 hours of leave to use as you like.
 - Dr. Bowen was wary of this as you must work a 40-hour week or use leave available to you, and all leave is mandated by the State and not ATU.
 - Another suggestion was to offer employees bonuses based on evaluations.
 - Dr. Bowen explained due budget constraints bonuses could not be given, but she does understand and wishes she could have allowed those to happen.
 - A suggestion was made instead of having a staff picnic, to instead give all employees a \$10.00 gift card or Jerry bucks to use at BazTech or another restaurant. The employee would be able to use the funds when it was convenient for them and not on a specified date or time.
 - An issue was voiced that the staff picnic event was during work hours, it makes it hard to stagger lunches, and the offices must remain open at all times.
 - Another issue brought forward by the senate was that staff were required to take their lunch break to attend the event.
3. Spring Break Hours/Summer Hours- Dr. Bowen mentioned a suggestion was brought to her about other universities having Friday off for Spring Break. After some research, it was concluded these Universities do not allow the employee to take the Birthday leave on any day but must use it for the Friday of Spring Break while the University is closed. Dr. Bowen was open to this suggestion and would like senate members to return their constituents for their opinions on this issue. Dr. Bowen also announced a Leadership Tech group has made flexible scheduling their project. Some ideas they are researching are four 10-hour days and employees working from home one day a week

if available. The leadership tech group will be researching other universities as well as the state law regarding these issues.

- Ms. Hinkle mentioned that some bottom level Classified Salaries will be adjusted because of the increase in minimum wage. This will cost the University an additional one million. The first 10 grades of classified positions were changed. The classification codes were C100-C110. See House Bill 1741 for the classification codes and other information. The new salaries will go into effect July 1, 2019.
- Ms. Hinkle explained no merit bonuses were available this year, but there will be a 1% COLA.
 - A senate member voiced concern that with the increase in insurance costs the 1% COLA does not even cover the increase they had to pay.
 - Dr. Bowen explained they are trying to work on the insurance rate issues, and explained that ATU's claims were higher than the premiums paid into Blue Cross Blue Shield. This is the issue that ATU is having with negotiations. Stevens Firm was hired to investigate these issues. Another issue is a policy was put into place decades ago to allow faculty who retire to have their insurance paid indefinitely. There was a lawsuit and a certain amount of employees were allowed to stay on this policy until they pass away. These employees are still on the policy and have to be accounted for in all of ATU's rates even after they reach the age 65. Dr. Bowen explained the coverage on these employees could continue for 5, 10 or even 25 more years. She also explained ATU is trying to work on cheaper rates at the local hospitals for ATU employees. She explained this is a work in progress, and she expressed she hopes it will become more affordable.

Open Floor- Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle exited the meeting and the senate floor was open to discussion:

- The following comments were made from the senate regarding the appreciation events:
 - The events after work hours such as the Appreciation Night at the Ballgame were not planned well. There were not enough vouchers available for all staff members. The fact that only 50-75 vouchers/T-Shirts were available for staff shows that not all staff would be appreciated if all had showed.
 - Offering staff a hot dog as appreciation was more like a slap in the face.
 - Not many staff members want to use their own lunch break just for a hot dog.
 - Other Company Picnics are usually big fun family picnics. Some even have live music or bump and jumps. The current appreciation events are lacking compared to other appreciation events.
 - More research should be done to compare ATU to other universities in the state and out of state to see how employees are appreciated and their perks, etc.
- Other issues were discussed below:

- Staff need better pay.
- Any staff senate member who is on a committee but their senate term ends still needs to inform the senate by e-mail or in person about the results of committee meetings. If the employee cannot do so, a new staff senate member needs to take their place.
- How is it allowed for the State to pay ATU less in appropriations just because it is ATU?
- How is ATU allowed to say we are only going to give a 1% COLA if a 2% COLA was approved ADHE?
- What if ATU offered incentives to employees to stay healthy to help lower their insurance costs. Such as if, you get a wellness check each year you get \$25.00 off your premium.
- How does ATU have money for multiple construction projects, but not to pay their employees better?
- ATU continues hiring all of these higher up positions that were not in place before, but what are these positions for? There are all of these new VP's and Associate VP's hired but nobody knows what they actually do?

Old Business

- Committee Updates:
 - Medical Marijuana- Met and went over current policies on drug use. The consensus of the group was if a policy was even necessary or if it was singling out marijuana users. The group will meet again to discuss whether to create a policy or to leave the current drug free policy in place to cover all users.
 - Insurance- No new update
 - Elections- Meets tomorrow June 6. Right now working to make sure prepared for the next election. Will update Senate in July.
 - Diversity- No new update.
- GGC Summer Food Drive- Food Drive will take place June 10-18, 2019 with the slogan "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation." Drop off locations will be posted as well as an announcement on OneTech with needed items
- Staff Senate Survey Results- The staff senate survey results will be sent out with the minutes and posted for all staff to review.
- Tuition Waiver- Meets again in July and will bring all information to the Senate. In the research phase at the moment.
- Pending Communication items- The following items are pending communication and will be reviewed as soon as information is available:
 - Spring Break and Summer Hours
 - Ms. Hinkle- Walkway request, picnic table request, staff awards timeline.
 - Dr. Gunter- Constitution Revision
 - Mr. Pennington- Staff Handbook, Official Function, Free Speech

Announcements

GGC Food Drive – June 10-18, 2019

Next Meeting:

July 3, 2019, 10:00-12:00 in Doc Bryan 180

- **Employee Spotlight for June:** Mike Bogue was drawn for the employee spotlight for the month of July.
- **Birthday Cards:** Birthday cards were presented for July birthdays to be signed and delivered.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Staff Senate By-laws Amendment (s)--Ratification:** Mr. Sikes approved all changes to the Staff Senate by-laws. Senator Bogue made a motion to assign the positions as listed below and move forward with all amendments approved by Mr. Sikes. Senator Schmalz seconded the motion, and all approved, motion carried.

Positions are listed below:

Position 1 (Fiscal Affairs and Computer Sciences) – Current Representation Stacie Harden- *Rolling off June 30, 2019*

Position 2 (Maintenance) - Current Representation- David Spicer- *Rolling off June 30, 2019*

Position 3 (Academic Affairs, Adult Ed, Business and Community Outreach, and Chancellor's Office) – Current Representation- Mike Bogue

Position 4 (Student Services) - Current Representation- Julie Schmalz

Position 5 (Arkansas Tech Career Center)- Current Representation- Jennifer Thomas

Position 6- (At-Large) - Current Representation- Erin Brickley

Positions #1 and #2 are currently open for the new election. These two positions will be voted on and announced in July.

- **Elections:** President Spicer spoke to the majority of applicable staff members for Positions 1 and 2. President Spicer and Vice President Schmalz will get a list compiled of the staff members who have agreed to serve. The ballot will be sent out on June 10th and close on June 21st. Staff members will be notified by e-mail and the results will be announced at the Staff Senate Potluck as well.
- **Ethics Policy/New Committee Updates:** Committees were formed and have the following updates:
 - Medical Marijuana- The committee met and brainstormed on if a policy is even needed for ATU. ATU is a drug free workplace and will continue to be even with medical marijuana. Many other universities are not making a separate medical marijuana policy, but keeping their current drug free policies in place to cover medical marijuana as well. Members were asked to go back to their departments and get opinions from other staff members. The next meeting date will be announced when available.
 - Ethics Policy- No update as this time.
 - Official Function- No update at this time.
 - Free Speech- No new update at this time.

- **Staff Professional Development:** There is no new update at this time.
- **Staff Potlucks:** The next Staff Senate Potluck is tentatively scheduled for June 28, 2019 at 8:00 a.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Next Meeting will include the two new members.
- Next meeting will include the election of officers.

GOOD AND WELFARE

The Staff Senate monthly meeting will be announced when new members have been notified and available dates are given.

ADJOURNMENT

Senator Bogue motioned, Senator Schmalz seconded, and all approved and motion carried to adjourn at 9:36 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Thomas, Secretary