Staff Senate Minutes

March 03, 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

Judy Crouch  
Deidra Dillard

Brandi Duvall   
Cole Hendrix  
Cindy Hubbard  
Susan Johnson  
Margie Link  
Teresa Lutz  
Kim McKown

Amber Meeks  
Cody Parsons

Lydia Rogers  
Tammy Rye  
Lyndsay Simpson  
Thomas Strahan

Jamie Young

**Senators Absent:**

Rachel Broussard

Cynthia Dixon

Krystal Manning

**Visitor(s):**

Dr. Naquindra Brooks

Melissa South

Alida Gutierrez

Allison Sheehan

Brooke Briley

Tyler Polk

Meredith Jones Lawson

Laury Fiorello

Tammy Guarino

Alisa Waniewski

Jessica Brock

Brandie Gibbs

Lisa Harris

Wyatt Watson

Brittany Reves

William Tomlin

Tracey Hale

Bryan Bramlett

Andrea Eubanks

Shirley Bonner

Blake Bedsole

Janet Carnahan-Lee

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the February 10, 2022 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Rye filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Parsons seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

**Special Report**

Ms. Laury Fiorello:

* VP Fiorello shared a Confidential budget for fiscal year 2023 and going out to fiscal year 2026. Assumptions were based on freshman goal enrollment of 1189, CPI increase of 2.83%, and benefit rate increase of 10%. ATU has built in a $1M operating contingency for each of these fiscal years. Faculty and staff salary increases, as well as, tuition and fee increases are also in the budget. At this time, all numbers are assumptions, numbers will be adjusted based on enrollment. A 1% increase or decrease in enrollment equates to approximately $1.1M. A 1% change in salaries is approximately $405K and a 1% change in benefits is approximately $75K. In the overall budget, salaries and benefits make up approximately 57%.
* Grant deadline is March 11, 2022. ATU has asked for an extension. There have been supply chain issues with some of the HVAC equipment.
* Encouraging everyone to participate in the strategic planning process.
* Staff appreciation is Friday, March 4 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Service milestone awards and certificates will be handed out and refreshments will be served in the West Dining Hall.

Dr. Blake Bedsole:

* For 2022, ATU is working on recruiting freshman, new transfer students and retention improvements. This could dramatically alter the model and make the situation better. Right now, the focus is the new student numbers. These are the students that stay for 4 to 6 years.
* There is a group co-chaired by Dr. Bedsole and Dean Cass that is working on recruiting students. Other subgroups are working on benchmarks to increase under-represented groups, focusing on transfer enrollment processes, and international numbers. These groups are also working on market share back up, increasing graduate student numbers and increasing certificate and micro credential numbers. These goals, if implemented, will work with the new 3-year university strategic plan.
* As part of the restructure, graduate recruiter position and assistant director for international recruitment position has been combined as a coordinator of graduate and international.
* Question from Staff Senate: What value added can ATU offer for the increase in tuition and fees? Answer: Will need to voice those concerns to Budget Advisor Committee.
* Question from Staff Senate: Is ATU expanding programs, such as, nursing and education? Employers will hire every student we graduate. Answer: A lot of programs are at capacity, would have to hire more faculty. What programs can grow without hiring more faculty? Have to make a case if we hire at this salary, how many students will it take to triple or quadruple the investment? That is being looked at.
* Question from Staff Senate: What is ROI for a student? Varies for undergrad versus grad students. Discount rate is approximately 29%, so 71% as a whole.

**Committee Reports**

* **President’s Communication-**

President’s Communication Committee February 22, 2022

# Dr. Bowen:

Please consider attending interviews for Interim VP for Academic Affairs position. If you attend, please submit feedback forms. Open forum registration is available via OneTech or via email sent campus-wide. Next candidate is Dr. Michael Anderson on Thursday, Feb. 24, at 2:15 p.m.

The next BOT meeting is scheduled for March 17 at the Ozark campus at 1:00 pm. Virtual viewing is available.

Monitoring winter weather moving into the area later this week. Please monitor communications regarding inclement weather plans. Please plan for remote work should we need to pivot to a remote work day. Work with your respective VPs should you have a unique situation.

# COVID-19 Update; Josh McMillian:

Cases are declining. Positivity rate has gone down to 11% from 17% two weeks ago. The goal is to get below 10% statewide. Pope County cases are also declining. All data points are trending in the right direction. Governor Hutchinson continues to encourage vaccinations. COVID-19 Management Plan has been updated. No more daily health screening required for employees. The cap on the number allowed for indoor gatherings has been lifted. Mask wearing and social distancing is still in place. The COVID-19 TF is monitoring the mask mandate. The CDC may be issuing new mask guidance soon and the COVID-19 TF will evaluate and make recommendations to EC as it becomes available.

# Enrollment Update; Dr. Bedsole:

Up in transfer applicants and down in freshman applicants on the Russellville campus. Graduate applicants are also down. Ozark campus is looking good in both transfer and undergraduate applicants. Student engagement is good. Optimistic for a good yield from this applicant pool. Admitted student event scheduled for March. Dr. Bowen reiterated that everyone has a role to play in recruitment and retention.

# Housing Update; Kevin Solomon:

Housing applications tend to indicate the seriousness of applicants in matriculating to a university. Housing applications are up for fall 2022 by 8.5% from this time last year. 342 students have already signed contracts. Cautiously optimistic that this trend will continue since traditionally most housing application increases are seen in March and April.

# Administration and Finance; Laury Fiorello:

* + Budget Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 25 at 9:00 am. Will be reviewing the campus master plan, budget assumptions, fee sub-committee report, etc.
* **Budget Advisory –** See Laury Fiorello’s note above
* **COVID Taskforce-** See COVID-19 Update in President’s Communication Committee notes
* **Scholarship –** No report
* **University Strategic Planning** – No Report
* **Insurance Committee –** No Report – Meeting on March 18, 2022
* **IT Prioritization and Impact** – Committee met on February 15, 2022. Had not met since October 12, 2021. Discussed VoIP phones. Moved about 250 people off Windstream. People are now on VoIP phones. Trying to keep the emergency blue light phones operational, experiencing shipping delays on replacement and parts needed. Has been substantial increases in all I.T. costs, for example, the firewall system that provides security and the VPN last August was $143K for 1 year. It is now $242K for 1 year and quotes are changing every 30 days. Trying to look at what provides the biggest bang for your money and looking at things that are no longer needed as cost savings. Limiting the length of contract renewals to 1 year, unless there is significant savings for longer contracts, such as 2 or 3 years, considering the return on investment. Also discussed E signatures, who needs them. Discussed cost of paper documents and also paper document management looking at workflow and tracking the approval.

Also mentioned moving to Workday software for administrative system, Ellucian contract ends in 2026.

* **University Communication Working Group –** No report
* **Campus Space and Utilization –** No report
* **Staff Awards –** No report
* **Special Projects/Events-** No report

**New Business / Discussion**

* Discussion from IT Prioritization and Impact notes. A lot of efficiencies could be drawn from automating within our jobs and using better systems. Need to look at how we do our jobs and research how things could be automated and/or more efficient. It may have initial costs, but if it saves time, makes the job easier, faster, and better and improves morale, it could be very valuable.
* New business: President Link ask for volunteers to serve on a working group to go over the Staff Senate survey. This was an action item from AGB Consulting Report; Item IV, Subsection b., ii. *An important action not suggested in internal documents would be to charge a small team of representatives from the Faculty Senate and the Staff Senate to review the surveys (particularly the most recent ones) to identify and prioritize actionable recommendations that would improve communication, transparency, shared governance and improve campus climate.*

This working group: Jamie Young, Kim McKown, Margie Link

Working group to help Dr. Naquindra Brooks, Diversity, Inclusion, and Contemporary Student Services Office. Volunteers: Jamie Young, Deidra Dillard, Cole Hendrix

*Below please find a description of the Staff Senate Diversity and Inclusion Working Group Deidra and I worked with Dr. Brooks, chair of the Staff Subcommittee of the Diversity and Equity Standing Committee for Tech:*

The Staff Senate Diversity and Inclusion Working Group exists to ensure that ATU staff members are actively engaged in the inclusive support of underrepresented students they serve as well as creating safe spaces and a deeper sense of belonging for staff who, themselves, identify in any underrepresented group or groups.

* Identify underrepresented staff and perform in-person outreach to them so they know they have an intentional voice and advocate in Staff Senate
* Help support the creation of a Campus Climate Response Team
* Re-establish an ATU food pantry to address food insecurity for under-resourced Tech students and staff

Time commitment is expected to be 2 hours monthly - 1 hour for a meeting and 1 hour working on projects or outreach.

*Let us know what you think and the best way to ask Staff Senators for their input/involvement!*

* [Summer Friday Afternoon Tracking Document](Summer%20Friday%20Afternoon%20Tracking.docx) Purpose of the tracking document is to gather data to see if offices need to be open on Fridays or Friday afternoons during the summer. Which offices have visitors and students coming in. The plan is to track all foot traffic that comes into offices for the entire day on Fridays. Mainly will be for student facing offices. These tracking documents will get turned into Tammy Rye and Dr. Nichols for discussion to EC.

**Old Business**

Bone Marrow Drive is April 14, 2022. Staff Senate voted to host the drive from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Annoucements**

Employee Appreciation Day, Friday, March 4, 2022, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m, West Dining Hall.

Human Resources is moving to 715 N El Paso Ave (across the street from Public Safety) on Monday, March 14, 2022.

Face coverings are no longer required on campus.

Williamson Hall re-dedication is at 2:00 p.m., March 3 (today).

University accomplishments due on Monday, March 7, 2022. Accomplishment will be published in the University accomplishment book.

**Next Meeting**

Thursday, April 7, 2022, 10 a.m. vis WebEx

**Meeting Adjourned**

Senator Rye filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Parsons seconded the motion. The Senate voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,   
Lyndsay Simpson, Secretary