Staff Senate Minutes

July 8, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Charity Smith called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Wednesday, July 8, 2020 at 10:02 am in Webex virtual online meeting.

**ROLL CALL Senators Present:**

Michelle Bishop Judy Crouch Brandi Duvall Kaitlin Ennis

Andrea Eubanks Susan Johnson Teresa Lutz Belinda Martin

Amber Meeks Alan Parsons Lydia Rogers Charity Smith Karissa Webb Alisha Williams

**Senators Absent:**

Kelli Bates Angie Bell Rachel Broussard Shelley Handley

Chris Pearson Brittany Reves

**Visitor(s):**

Dr. David Eshelman Alina House (Ozark)

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the June 2020 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Williams filed a motion to accept the minutes and record the meeting virtually. Senator Crouch seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

**Special Report**

President Smith noted Ms. Bernadette Hinkle has resigned from the University, effective July 1st. To fill the Interim position is Vice President for Administration and Finance, Dr. Linda Birkner. Dr. Birkner is unable to attend this meeting today, but no updates were provided.

**Committee Reports**

* **President’s Communication –**. Below email attachment from President Smith

**Dr. Bowen:**

The Governor announced that today we should get $1.6 million added back to our budget by midnight tonight. We can carry this over for 2021.

Be ready to pivot any time. We may not be given much notice to go back to working remotely or to update our office policies. Be flexible.

When we go back in August, the majority of campus will work Monday-Thursday in office and Fridays work virtually. Campus will not be closed because there may be Friday classes. FAMA is going to use Fridays to deep clean offices, etc.

**Sarah Gordon:**

Gave an update on the communications survey that everyone was asked to complete. They are working to publish the results online for everyone to view.

Dr. Bean announced that Sarah will be the interim department head of CSP beginning July 1.

**Heath Whorton:**

Campus is currently in Phase 1 of our COVID plan and we don’t know when we will go to Phase 2. We are in no hurry.

His committee is working on a “commitment to protect” document for faculty and staff to sign saying we are committed to being inconvenienced for a while. (Exp: wearing masks, working virtually, etc). He is also working on training videos for faculty and staff.

**Dr. Bedsole:**

UG enrollment is down 9%, International enrollment is down 20%, Graduate enrollment is down 4%. This is the equivalent of 560 students less than last year. We still have a lot of undecided students.

**Bruce Sikes:**

Ozark enrollment is down 6%. Continuing students are about the same and transfer students are up. Freshmen are lagging.

**Brandi Tripp:**

In-person commencements for Spring and Summer are cancelled.

On 8/8/20 we will have a virtual graduation (celebration) on the ATU graduation website. Graduates will receive an email to upload their picture and a quote (or thank you). When the student uploads their information, a preview will show on the right of the screen. They should contact the bookstore if they want to purchase regalia for the picture. The celebration will include pictures, quotes, PDF programs, a message from Dr. Bowen and Bruce Sikes and the Music department is working on the Alma Mater. OIS is working to get the website going.

There have been 2,446 P/NC petitions for Spring 2020 as of today. The deadline is August 1st.

**Amy Pennington:**

Government released new rules for Title IX requirements in May (2,086 pages). These have to be done by the middle of August. Has some updates to the sexual harassment and misconduct policies. We will be informed of the updates as they come about. The changes will go before the Board of Trustees on 8/14. She wanted us to be aware changes are coming, but there will be training available.

**Delton Gordon:**

I copied this straight from the WebEx chat box:

Residence Life and Campus Life will begin hosting a Live Talk Show every other week this year to help communicate out to students, ATU Live! The ATU Live! Talkshow will broadcast every other Thursday starting July 9 from 7-7:30pm. Hosted by Residence Life and Campus Life, the show will feature special guests who will touch on topics relevant to life on campus (transitioning from high school to college, move-in, involvement, mental health, etc.). The show will engage the audience through games, Q&A, and by addressing their questions LIVE. Talk show hosts will be Zoe Stokes from Campus Life and LaBrian Phillips from Residence Life. The ATU Live! Team is integrated by the housing ambassadors and the Residence Life marketing interns under the supervision of Delton Gordon-Associate Dean for Residence Life and Laura Palmer-Coordinator of Marketing and Assignments. Any departments desiring to be featured on the show may contact us at atulive@atu.edu.

* **Budget Advisory –** No report
* **Scholarship –** No report
* **University Strategic Planning –** No report
* **Insurance Committee –** Senator Bell communicated to President Smith via email,if we choose to stay with BlueCross BlueShield there will not a raise in our premium. This has not been finalized, the committee is still exploring the option to be self-insured. Full insurance options do not close until July 29th.
* **IT Prioritization and Impact** – Senator Crouch stated Cares Act has been a positive for IT. IT received funding for ADA compliance software for Blackboard, 50 additional lecture capture rooms, core networking and switching, University data center, infrastructure reserve, and 40 laptop to replace the ones borrowed from Academic department during spring remote working.
* **University Communication Working Group –** No report but group has been a presentation during the Presidents Communication meeting.
* **Campus Space and Utilization –** No report
* **Green and Gold Cupboard –** No report
* **Staff Awards –** No report

**Old Business**

*Special Election*

Vice President Duvall noted there was no nomination entered. Senator Eubanks questioned if we can make this an at-large position or get input from that division on what they would prefer as representation. President Smith stated we do not want to give up that Senator position. There was work from the previous Senates to create equal representation, we will look at the Constitution and By Laws to be sure of our next step. Senator Bishop mentioned that departments are short staffed and this is a busy time of the year for Admin and Finance, that could be reason no one has stepped forward for the role. President Smith noted for a regular election timeline, that begins August/September, elections are in October to be effective for November. However, Mervin’s position would have an entire year, to fill the 2-year obligation. Senator Parsons suggested trying again. Vice President Duvall noted this is the second attempt, so doing the at-large position makes the most sense. Two options, one to review and consider making the change to at-large or table for a later date. Senator Eubanks made a motion to make open Senator seat an at-large position. Senator Meeks seconded the motion. The Senate voted to approve the open position be changed to at-large.

*Staff Senate Survey*

President Smith state this is still being working on. We want to keep this on the minutes to show the relevance of the work.

*Pandemic Task Force*

President Smith noted the feedback regarding Staff Senate not being included in the group. Heath Whorton was contacted and reply with the following:

“We initially set up the covid-19 task force four months ago. We were concerned with making sure that we did have good representation from across the University. The bulk of our task force of more than twenty people are staff members. In fact, I believe only three are not staff members. I have reviewed the members and areas of the staff Senate and I believe their interest have been represented on the task force. We have also worked every week to inform all area VP’s through EC, which is where our initial effort to have people place on the task force began. Any new additions to the task force will need to done through EC. This has been the process for any additions we have made as we want each VP to be aware of the personnel representing their areas.”

President Smith relayed to Mr. Whorton that our purpose as Staff Senate is being undermined. We are not able to represent in an advisory capacity for this matter. List of members will be sent out to us at the conclusion of this meeting. President Smith will address this matter further with Dr. Birkner. Senator Eubanks stated none of the staff members on the task force would qualify for Staff Senate. No one in a supervisory position can hold a Senator position. The task force meets every Tuesday, Senator Eubanks asked they Mr. Whorton provide us a direct update afterwards? Senator Rogers stated those supervisors on the task force have the same type of interactions with students and with other faculty when the campus reopens. The concern is that we have to reach out to information, understanding this is fluid, but had there been a Staff Senate member been included the trickle down of information would have much quicker and explained in a much better way.

**New Business**

*Daily Health Screening*

President Smith mentioned the policy began July 6th, effective for all faculty and staff. It is to be completed before leaving your home each day. If you experience any of the symptoms listed on the document, report to your supervisor and notify the Health and Wellness Center. Information is located on OneTech and must be done each day.

**Open Forum**

Senator Eubanks noted our EC liaison has transitioned over two years, from the President, to the Chief of Staff, to the VP of Admin and Finance. Since the VP position is Interm, it would be in our best interest to request our liaison be changed back to the Chief of Staff. It makes more sense than a dedicated VP. Staff Senate as a whole is made up of all divisions, reporting to one division in particular does not add up. It can also be intimidating to meet with a VP, especially in some of our current positions. It would be more comfortable with Dr. Gunter or Chief of Staff would be more palatable to some. This is a thought or suggestion moving forward.

Senator Crouch stated ICEE has released new protocols for International Students. They are not allowed to attend online only programs. During the pandemic, they made some adjustments to that policy to allow International students to switch online and maintain their student visas. That temporary exemption is expiring and they have released new information. If there is a college going online, those International students have to find another place for face-to-face courses or return home. Senator Crouch spoke with Yaushi and is going to follow up with additional information since that is out there is confusing. Senator Eubanks inquired how is the finals schedule coming along, since we are talking about going virtual after Thanksgiving and finals being all online. Senator Crouch will follow up with that question. The International Office is still waiting for their Student Exchange Visitor Program rep. President Smith asked if any International students were able to stay when we switched to virtual? Senator Crouch stated many went home to be in a safe environments, but some have stayed as well. This could be detrimental to the US and those students. There is also information out there saying if a student has returned home and their University is online, they would not allowed to return to the US. The pandemic has not changed but the exemptions are expiring and returning back to pre-covid policies.

President Smith wanted to point out our Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is providing some professional development videos on OneTech announcements regarding leadership and decisions fatigue, maximizing Webex Teams, and so on.

**Announcements**

**Meeting Adjourned**

Senator Crouch filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Eubanks seconded the motion. The Senate voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:15am.

**Next Meeting**

August 12, 2020 @ 10:00 am in Webex virtual online meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Karissa Webb, Secretary