

Staff Senate Minutes

April 3, 2019

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Lou Ann Reeves called the Arkansas Tech Staff Senate meeting to order on Wednesday, April 3, 2019 at 10:00 am in Doc Bryan Student Services Center 108.

**ROLLCALL Senators Present:**

Kelli Bates Michelle Bishop Josh Carey Pam Dixon

Brandi Duvall Andrea Eubanks Megan Green Dona Kirkpatrick Braxton Lay Chelsea Martin Marvin Mashburn Michelle McMinn

Lou Ann Reeves Tera Simpson Charity Smith Hope Vilavanh

Denise Wallis Karissa Webb

**Senators Absent:**

Angela Bell Dona Kirkpatrick Chris Pearson

**Visitor(s):**

Thomas Pennington

**Visitor Presentation**

Thomas Pennington presented an update to the Senate on the Staff Handbook process. Mr. Pennington stated that the book is 109 pages and nearing completion. After the draft left the Staff Senate subcommittee, it was reviewed by an executive council subcommittee and edits were made and reviewed by the full executive council. The Staff Handbook will now return to the Staff Senate for review, editing, and voting.

As part of the Staff Handbook update Mr. Pennington presented an update on the payment of sick leave for non-classified employees who retire. The State of Arkansas has amended a law to allow non-classified employees to receive a payment of up to $7500 for unused sick leave accrued at the time of retirement. This is being written into the Staff Handbook. But wording has not yet been finalized. More financial information will be gathered before a final policy is created.

Mr. Pennington reported that the Free Speech committee had met to discuss changes to the current Free Speech policy to account for the changes made to state law regarding speech on public college campuses. Mr. Pennington asked for a special meeting of the Staff Senate to be held so review and vote on the policy before the May Board of Trustees meeting.

Mr. Pennington reported that the Medical Marijuana Policy Committee had met and discussed three options for the policy concerning safety and security job positions. The committee is still exploring these options.

Mr. Pennington reported that Board Policies will be available online at [www.atu.edu/ucounsel](http://www.atu.edu/ucounsel) within a few weeks.

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the March 6, 2019 meeting were distributed electronically to the Senate and at the meeting. Senator McMinn filed a motion to accept the minutes and Senator Martin seconded the motion. The Senate voted to approve the minutes.

**Committee Reports**

* **Official Function Committee** – No Report
* **Insurance Committee** – Senator Carey reported that Executive Council has decided against working with an insurance broker and will work with an insurance advisor instead. The committee has chosen Stevens as the advisor to work with via an RFP process. (Edited for clarification at the May 1, 2019 Staff Senate Meeting)
* **Scholarship Committee** – Senator Smith reported that all staff scholarships have been awarded, but not everyone has been notified. Announcements will be made soon.
* **Awards Committee** – President Reeves reported that the committee is seeking feedback from Dr. Bowen and Dr. Gunter regarding the proposed awards program.
* **Elections Committee** – President Reeves reported that the committee has put together an election timeline. They are waiting on outcome of the Staff Senate constitutional amendment before moving forward.
* **Constitution & Bylaws Committee** – President Reeves reported that the Staff Senate constitutional amendment concerning the Mission and Function of the Senate has been taken to Executive Council and will be discussed at the April 3 meeting.

**Old Business**

President Reeves reported that the Faculty Senate did not vote to partner with the Staff Senate on a Green and Gold Cupboard Food drive for this spring. President Reeves called for volunteers within the Staff Senate to coordinate a Spring 2019 food drive. The Senate discussed logistics concerning a spring drive. After discussion Senator Eubanks made a motion to postpone the food drive to the summer, Senator Martin seconded the motion, the Staff Senate voted on the motion, and the motion was approved.

President Reeves opened the floor to revisit the discussion of the Faculty/Staff Tuition Waiver deadline. The Senate discussed the current deadline of the first day of class. During the discussion the Senate agreed that the first day of class put an undue burden on staff members due to there still being time to add and drop classes. Senator Webb made a motion to move the deadline from the first day of class to the 11th class day to align with the Graduate Assistant Waiver deadline. Senator Martin seconded the motion. The Staff Senate voted on the motion and the motion was approved.

President Reeves reported that the Senate’s request to pave the walkway between the Public Safety/Browning/Caraway parking lot and Brown Hall is currently being reviewed by Ms. Hinkle.

President Reeves reported that the results of the staff survey concerning the performance of the Staff Senate have been received and are being reviewed. A report will be made at the May Staff Senate meeting.

**New Business:**

President Reeves presented a diversity survey to the Senate and asked the senators will fill it out and hand it back. She reported that the Diversity Committee is working on ways to increase diversity at the institution. President Reeves opened the floor for discussion of diversity initiatives. It was noted by the Senate that hiring committees do get diverse job candidates, but that it is difficult get them to commit to the offer because of the community climate. A suggestion was made to recruit staff in a similar manner to faculty since the faculty population is more diverse than staff. It was also noted that supervisors and search committees need to be educated on the importance of diversity. Finally, it was noted that it is difficult to recruit diverse candidates into a community and state that is actively opposed to such initiatives.

President Reeves opened the floor to discussion of the best modes of communication for senators. It was determined that email continues to be the most reliable form of communication.

President Reeves reported on the issue of senators changing jobs while serving their Senate terms. The Senate discussed the issue and determined that it will now be a practice within the Senate that if a Senator changes job positions within the university during their term that they will continue representing and reporting to the area that elected them until the end of their term.

**Open Forum**

Senator Smith reported that a request from her area has been made to add picnic tables outside near Brown Hall.

Senators Smith and Vilavanh reported that requests from their areas have been made regarding adjusted Spring Break and Summer hours for staff. The suggestion of four ten-hour days for summer hours were discussed, as well as a day or half-day off during Spring Break. It was noted that the University of Arkansas has a Spring Break hours policy that gives staff the Friday of Spring Break off. President Reeves stated that she will research these options and report back to the Senate.

President Reeves reported that the Staff Senate received a suggestion via the online comment box on the Staff Senate Website. It was suggested that the annual Halloween party include a group costume entry category. President Reeves stated she would pass this suggestion on.

**Announcements**

Staff Cookout is May 23.

Agriculture Spring Plant Sale has been moved to April 26th and 27th.

**Meeting Adjourned:**

Senator McMinn filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Martin seconded the motion. The Senate voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:21am.

**Next Meeting:**

May 1, 2019, @ 10:00 am in Doc Bryan 180

Respectfully submitted,

Tera Simpson, Secretary