

Staff Senate Minutes

June 5, 2019

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Lou Ann Reeves called the Arkansas Tech Staff Senate meeting to order on Wednesday, June 5, 2019 at 10:01 am in Doc Bryan Student Services Center 108.

**ROLLCALL Senators Present:**

Kelli Bates Angela Bell Michelle Bishop Josh Carey

Pam Dixon Brandi Duvall Andrea Eubanks Megan Green

Braxton Lay Belinda Martin Marvin Mashburn Michelle McMinn

Lou Ann Reeves Tera Simpson Charity Smith Hope Vilavanh

Denise Wallis Karissa Webb

**Senators Absent:**

Chris Pearson

**Visitor(s):**

Dr. Robin Bowen Ms. Bernadette Hinkle Dr. David Eshelman

Alexis Scrimshire

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the May 5, 2019 meeting were distributed electronically to the Senate. Senator McMinn filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Webb seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a Senate vote.

**Special Notice**

President Reeves presented the resignation of Senator Dona Kirkpatrick to the Senate. Senator Kirkpatrick represented FAMA. Belinda Martin was appointed to replace Senator Kirkpatrick as the holder of the second-highest number of votes for her area in the previous election. Senator Martin will serve out the remainder of Senator Kirkpatrick’s term. The position will be up for election in Fall 2020.

President Reeves also presented the resignation of Senator Chelsea Martin. Senator Martin represented Academic Affairs. President Reeves reported that the other two candidates who ran in the same election as Senator Martin no longer work in the Academic Affairs area. President Reeves stated she was working with the area to find a representation solution for the area until the Staff Senate election this Fall.

**Visitor Presentations**

Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle addressed the Staff Senate concerning the Staff Senate survey results and a list of priorities that President Reeves had presented to Dr. Bowen. A copy of the priorities presented to Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle can be found on the Staff Senate website with the minutes for this meeting.

Dr. Bowen thanked the staff for their responses to the survey. She stated that she respects the input and opinions of the staff and asked the Senate to help address the issues noted in the survey results. To address the needs of the staff, Dr. Bowen, Ms. Hinkle, and the Senate discussed the following:

* Ms. Hinkle will now be the Staff Senate liaison to the Executive Council, bringing the Staff Senate in-line with the Faculty Senate who send communication to Executive Council via the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Student Government Association who send communication to Executive Council through the Vice President for Student Affairs.
* The Senate communicated to Dr. Bowen that staff reported in the survey that the appreciation nights and staff cookout were not as effective rewards as other options could be. Dr. Bowen expressed that she was open to other forms of showing appreciation for staff. The Senate will work with their constituent areas to brainstorm ideas for a better appreciation system.
* Dr. Bowen stated that she would like to improve morale on campus and asked the Senate for ideas to do so. The following ideas were debated:
	+ More time off was requested as a reward. Ms. Hinkle stated that the State of Arkansas requires a certain number of days to be worked and we already comply with that requirement. Senator Bell stated that other universities get the Friday of Spring Break off and asked if we could as well. Ms. Hinkle answered that those universities trade their birthday day off for the Friday of Spring Break. Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle were both open to the Senate exploring this as an option. The Senate agreed to do more work with their constituents to determine if this was a viable alternative. Dr. Bowen also stated that a Leadership Tech group is exploring flexible working hours as their project.
	+ Senator Carey stated that he had received a gift of Jerrybucks in the past.
	+ Senator Mashburn asked Ms. Hinkle about pay and bonuses for classified employees. Ms. Hinkle answered and noted that the structured changes apply to classified employees only. No changes were made to unclassified employees. Due to HB 1741 Act 763 passed on April 5, 2019 and effective on July 1, 2019, classified employees in grades below C-111 will get pay increases due to the raising of minimum wage. If you are unsure of your grade and want to check, you can call Human Resources or look at your Classified Notice.
	+ Senator Bell asked Ms. Hinkle and Dr. Bowen about the rise in insurance rates experienced over the last two years. Senator Bell stated that the sharp increase in insurance costs coupled with small cost of living increases results in decreased earnings for many employees. Senator Bell also asked what was contributing to the university’s rising insurance costs. Dr. Bowen answered that the university’s claims had exceeded premiums for several years so Blue Cross and Blue Shield increased the rates. Dr. Bowen stated that a contributing factor to this comes from a university policy that was enacted decades ago that stated that retired faculty could remain on the university insurance for the remainder of their lives. During the Dr. Brown administration, it became apparent that this was an unsustainable policy and moved to change the policy. A resulting lawsuit ensured that a group of retired faculty were allowed to remain on the university insurance, but that no new retiring faculty could join. As this group ages their medical costs increase, increasing insurance claims. Ms. Hinkle stated that she expects a positive outcome after the Stevens group reviews our insurance.
	+ Senator Simpson asked Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle about the formation of ad hoc university committees and their relationship to standing committees. Senator Simpson stated that it is difficult for faculty and staff to know when ad hoc committees are created, what they are making decisions about, who serves on the committees, and how to contact them. Senator Simpson noted that university standing committees have space dedicated on the university website for their committee membership, agendas and minutes, and contact information. She asked why this same standard is not applied to ad hoc committees. Ms. Hinkle answered that there is a flow chart explaining the ad hoc committee process and that she would provide this flow chart to the Staff Senate.

Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle thanked the Staff Senate for their time and stated that they look forward to working with the Senate on these issues. Dr. Bowen and Ms. Hinkle then left the meeting.

Dr. David Eshelman, Faculty Senate President, addressed the Staff Senate to state that the Vice President of Academic Affairs attends every Faculty Senate meeting to serve as a liaison to the Executive Council on behalf of the Faculty Senate.

**Committee Reports**

* **Official Function Committee** – No Report
* **Insurance Committee** – No Report
* **Scholarship Committee** – No Report
* **Awards Committee** – No Report
* **Elections Committee** – President Reeves reported that the Elections Committee will be meeting on June 6 to begin preparations for Staff Senate elections.
* **Constitution & Bylaws Committee** –No Report
* **Staff Handbook Committee** – No Report
* **Medical Marijuana Committee** – Vice President Eubanks reported that the committee had met in May and discussed not asking employees about medical prescriptions due to privacy rights and asked how medical marijuana was different from other prescription drugs in this regard. The committee noted that other schools are not currently taking action on this issue.
* **Free Speech Committee** – No Report
* **Diversity Committee** – No Report

**Old Business**

*Green and Gold Cupboard*

President Reeves yielded the floor to Senator Smith to discuss the upcoming food drive for the Green and Gold Cupboard. Senators Smith, Bell, Green, and Wallis are co-chairing this event. Senator Smith reported that the dates for this food drive will be June 10-18 and the theme will be Hunger Doesn’t Take a Vacation. The food drive will work to stock the food pantry to help with the extended need due to the recent flooding in the area. Senator Smith distributed a flyer for senators to hang in their area. Senator Smith stated that she will be providing boxes if needed.

*Staff Senate Survey Results*

President Reeves reported that the results of the staff survey sent out in the spring semester have been compiled and the results have been sent to Dr. Bowen. The results will also be available on the Staff Senate website with the minutes for this meeting.

*Faculty Staff Tuition Waiver*

President Reeves re-visited an item from the May Staff Senate meeting concerning the Faculty/Staff Tuition Waiver policy. President Reeves has called a meeting of the Staff Senate sub-committee formed at the May meeting to bring a plan for changes to the Tuition Waiver policy to the Senate for review at the July meeting. The sub-committee members are Senators Smith, Duvall, Webb, and President Reeves.

*Pending items*

President Reeves reported that she is waiting on responses for the following active business items:

* The request to pave the walkway between the Caraway/Browning parking lot and Brown Hall
* The request to add picnic tables near Brown Hall
* The proposed revision to the Staff Senate Constitution
* The submitted timeline for Staff Awards
* The revisions to the Staff Handbook
* The Official Function policy
* The Free Speech policy

**New Business:**

*Senate Vacancies*

President Reeves reported that Senator Dona Kirkpatrick resigned from the Staff Senate. President Reeves stated that in the last election, Belinda Martin received the second-highest number of votes after Dona. President Reeves appointed Senator Martin to fill the vacant position representing FAMA for the remainder of Senator Kirkpatrick’s term. The position will be up for election in Fall 2020.

President Reeves reported that Senator Chelsea Martin resigned from the Staff Senate due to accepting a job outside ATU. Senator Martin was one of the representatives for Academic Affairs. President Reeves reported that the other two candidates who ran in the same election as Senator Martin no longer work in the Academic Affairs area. President Reeves stated she was working with the area to find a representation solution for the area until the Staff Senate election this Fall. Senator Duvall volunteered to communicate with the Senator Martin’s area until an appointment could be made. Senator Smith filed a motion to table a decision on filling the vacancy until the July meeting, to give President Reeves time to work with Senator Martin’s constituency to find a solution for temporary representation until elections are held.

*Staff Senate Goals*

President Reeves asked the Senate to return to their constituents and ask them for their input on ideas to improve communication and morale. These suggestions will be reviewed at the July meeting.

**Open Forum**

President Reeves opened the floor for open forum discussion. In regard to the request at the last meeting by Senator Lay for more information regarding the 1% COLA, President Reeves asked Human Resources for more information. President Reeves reported that due to budget restrictions, ATU is not participating in the 2% COLAs or merit increases that other institution are participating in.

President Reeves reported that the online feedback form had received several submissions:

* A request was made for more bicycle racks. President Reeves reported that Procurement is working on this issue.
* A request for more supervisor training was made. President Reeves reported that Human Resources is providing more supervisor training for the evaluation process and that supervisors can contact Carla for help with non-classified evaluations and Sandra for classified evaluations. Senator Bishop noted that it is important for supervisors to turn in their evaluations on time. This is a big help to Human Resources.
* A request for Excel training was made. The Senate discussed various Professional Development opportunities for staff in regard to Excel training. Multiple senators reported that ATU has several courses available and that if enough need was established a faculty member might be able to teach a course if compensated. Online instruction sources such as YouTube were also discussed.

Senator Bishop asked Senator Carey if the Insurance Committee had looked at options for wellness incentives. Senator Carey answered that this was something the Stevens group would make suggestions on.

Senator Wallis suggested that working toward allowing faculty and staff to visit the Health & Wellness Center on campus would be a good benefit for employees and help with morale.

**Announcements**

No announcements

**Meeting Adjourned:**

Senator McMinn filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Dixon seconded the motion. The Senate voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:01 pm.

**Next Meeting:**

July 3, 2019, @ 10:00 am in Doc Bryan 180

Respectfully submitted,

Tera Simpson, Secretary