



STAFF SENATE

Wednesday, May 4, 2016
Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The Tech Staff Senate was called to order by President Collins on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 202 of Baswell Techionery.

ROLL CALL

Senators Present:

Sandra Anderson
Brandi Collins
Pam Cooper
Shawna Davis
Rhonda Fleming
Brittany Flippo
Lindelle Fraser
Amanda Handley
Tiffany Henry
James Higgs

Danny Jones
Margie Link
Annie McNeely
Jeff Mumert
Jeff Nichols
Julia Pope
Lindsey Riedmueller
Ryan Taylor
Roger Trusty
Bettye Williamson

Senators Absent:

None

Visitor(s):

Jennifer Thomas, Ozark Campus
David Waterson, Office of Information Systems
Brooke Southard, Human Resources and Payroll

On May 4, 2016, the minutes from the April 6, 2016 meeting were distributed electronically and approved as corrected.

OLD BUSINESS

TIAA-Cref

Brooke Southard, Interim Director for Human Resources and Payroll, was a guest at the meeting and shared information concerning the approved TIAA-Cref changes, potential changes to the health insurance plans, and the Leadership Tech selection process. Per Ms. Southard, loans from mandatory contributions have been approved up to \$25,000. In addition, loans from supplemental retirement have been approved up to \$50,000 (Note: the IRS limit is \$50,000 and this is the aggregate cap for loans taken from mandatory and supplemental contributions). Employees separating from the university may roll over or withdraw retirement funds (a tax penalty exists for employees making withdrawals before the age of 59 ½).



OLD BUSINESS (continued)

Potential Health Insurance Changes

Currently, the university is waiting on initial renewal numbers, also called “experience”. These numbers include claims from the first few months of a new year and help Blue Cross/Blue Shield project if they are providing coverage at a loss. Per Ms. Southard, the latest numbers indicate ATU is operating at a 90% loss, which is considerably better than years’ previous (106% loss last year). The university is considering multiple strategies to negotiate premium rates. Note: No decisions have been made. Ms. Southard shared the following ideas with the senate:

- Multiple plan designs/structures
- Employee pay-in
 - Would start low if this is the case
 - Possible income-based tiers
 - Nothing has been decided
- Wellness initiatives
 - Blue Cross/Blue Shield does not give much credit, but everything helps
- Step-therapy for prescription drugs
 - This would apply to all members – employees *and* dependents
 - New prescriptions would begin with generic, if available, for a short period of a few months
 - Old prescriptions would be grandfathered in
 - Ms. Southard will ask about exceptions
- PPO with a higher deductible
- Health Savings Account (HSA) option
 - Ms. Southard did note it may be a little late to introduce this type of plan; however, if it became a viable option, decision-making tools would be available to guide employees

At this point, no decisions have been made. Pricing options from Blue Cross/Blue Shield are needed before any changes are decided upon and the university will consider quotes for a variety of options. Ms. Southard does not anticipate more definite numbers will be available before August.

Pay Schedule update

Ms. Southard is asking for more feedback before the potential change is presented before the Executive Council. The back and forth change between semi-monthly and monthly would be difficult to manage and increase the margin of error. President Collins plans to initiate a campus-wide survey to determine the overall support for the proposed change. The survey will be sent to employees once she has received approval.



OLD BUSINESS (continued)

Leadership Tech

It was brought to the Senate's attention that some classified staff members were concerned with the lack of classified staff representation in the 2016 Leadership Tech cohort. Out of roughly 90 nominations received by the committee (118 total – some nominations were duplicates), only 3 belonged to classified staff members. Per Ms. Southard, the members of the 2016 cohort were selected solely on the quality of their applications. Ms. Southard asked senators to encourage constituents in nominating more classified staff during the next application process to create a more diverse pool of candidates.

Videophone Policy

There are no plans to create a campus-wide policy for the use of videophones, per President Collins. At this time, the procedures for using videophones will be developed at the discretion of individual departments.

Custodial Parking

As a follow-up on previous business, President Collins shared information from recent discussions with Public Safety. At this time, there are no plans to add additional red parking spaces near the residence halls to accommodate early-morning shifts. Red spaces are available in the Dean, Stroupe, and Hull parking lots. In addition, employees with red hangtags may park in any open spaces, excluding handicap or visitor spaces. If employees see suspicious happenings, they are encouraged to contact Public Safety to report their observations.

NEW BUSINESS

Anonymous Complaint

President Collins shared an anonymous complaint submitted via the Staff Senate website concerning management practices in Facilities Management. The anonymous complainant alleges unnamed members of management within Facilities Management demonstrate inconsistent behavior toward employees and show favoritism, allowing favored employees to move to buildings of their preference. President Collins took the matter to Brian Lasey, Facilities Management Director, and received the following response:

“FAMA employees are treated equally regardless of whether they are a custodian, maintenance employee, or office employee. Because of the number of employees involved we are not able to provide transportation from the office to each building for custodial employees. All FAMA employees receive the same safety training unless OSHA requires their particular trade receive additional training. All FAMA employees have the same paid holidays. All FAMA employees accrue vacation and sick leave at the same state allowed rates. All FAMA employees are invited to participate in holiday gatherings or luncheons. (continued)



All permanent reassignments of custodians are approved by the FAMA assistant director before the custodial director reassigns an employee. This process was implemented about two years ago. As you can imagine, with a crew of 64 employees it's very likely at any particular time for someone to be absent, occasionally for an extended period of time. The size of the crew and the nature of their work also increases the likelihood of an employee experiencing an injury that may require an accommodation be made for their injury/disability. The vast majority of reassignments are made to provide an accommodation for an employee in one of these situations, either extended absence or injury/disability."

It was agreed that the answer from Mr. Lasey sufficiently answered the complaint. The matter was closed.

Campus-Wide Jeans Policy

A vote was requested for a campus-wide jeans policy. Currently, the decision for casual/jeans days are at the discretion of individual departments in line with the guidelines set forth by their respective vice presidents. The senate voted unanimously to maintain the current guidelines for casual/jeans days and not to recommend the drafting of a campus-wide policy.

Online Leave Request System

David Waterson with the Office of Information Systems visited the staff senate to share information about the new online leave request system that is due to roll out campus-wide later this year. Per Mr. Waterson, this system provides real time analytics on leave. The balances are pulled from Banner and reflect the actual available amounts. Drop down boxes and date selection make the interface user-friendly. In addition, the new system features a leave calendar that allows employees within a department to plan leave and ensure continuous operations. Supervisors will be notified via email once requests have been made. Mr. Waterson indicates supervisors will be coached and informed that leave approval in the new system is a day-in, day-out process. Senator Cooper asked if there were a possibility of a pending transaction reminder email. Mr. Waterson said he would look into this.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After the May meeting, President Collins received information from a concerned employee stating that only classified employees are able to cash out a percentage of their unused sick leave upon retirement, up to \$7500. She confirmed this with Human Resources. The law states that the institution determines whether or not this is allowed for unclassified employees. Staff Senate voted via email to advance the idea that Arkansas Tech compensate all employees, not just classified, with the proper percentage of unused sick leave up to \$7500 upon retirement. President Collins sent a memo to Dr. Bowen, Dr. Mott, and Mrs. Southard on May 17 after



**ARKANSAS TECH
UNIVERSITY**

ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

receiving a majority vote from the senators. Dr. Bowen responded that she will research the issue.

GOOD AND WELFARE

Our next regular meeting will be Wednesday, June 1, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. in Baswell Techionery, Room 202.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m. by President Collins.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindelle Fraser, Secretary

