Staff Senate Minutes

May 5, 2021

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Margie Link called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. in Webex virtual online meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

**Senators Present:**

Kaitlynn Beaird

Angie Bell

Rachel Broussard

Judy Crouch

Cynthia Dixon

Brandi Duvall

Kaitlin Ennis

Cole Hendrix

Susan Johnson

Margie Link

Teresa Lutz

Amber Meeks

Alan Parsons

Lydia Rogers

Tammy Rye

Brittany Reves Lyndsey Simpson

Amee Standridge

Alisa Williams

**Senators Absent:**

Christopher Duncan

Shelly Handley

Cole Hendrix

**Visitor(s):**

Linda Birkner

Alida Gutierrez

Ashlyn Lee

Allison Sheehan

Alisa Waniewski

Brandi Collins

Brandie Gibbs

Carly Ashlock

Christy Longoria

Deidra Dillard

Donna Henderson

Liz Chrisman

Heather Taylor

Joceline Argueta

Jessica Brock

Jana Crouch

Jennifer Griffin

Jeremy Schwehm

Jennifer Thomas

Katelyn Griffith

Kerri Threlkeld

Niki Schwartz

Meredith Jones Lawson

Morgan Lunsford

Mike Rivas

Melissa South

Meaghan Wilt

Paula Reed

Rhonda Ralph

Sabrina Billey

Stacy Galbo

Suzanne Kellar

Tyler Cannon

Tracey Hale

Tressie Marshall

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the April 7th, 2021 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Duvall filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Crouch seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

**Special Report**

Dr. Birkner:

* HVAC projects with CARES Funding: Plan to update HVAC systems in Crabaugh, Witherspoon, and Dean, in addition to some buildings at the Ozark campus. This will increase air flow and reduce spread of viruses per ASHRAE standards as well as improve energy proficiency and performance.
* Jones Hall remodel: They originally planned to remodel along the way, but the winter storm pushed them to move the remodel up quickly as it is one of the favorite residence halls among students.
* Old El Paso: Part of administration and finance staff will move there in mid- to late fall– HR, payroll, accounting procurement, and budget. Hospitality will move back to Williamson in early fall.
* 404 Fiber Project: Install fiber along university properties to 404 Old El Paso building. This project shouldn’t be too intrusive and will begin this summer.
* Hull roof project: They are currently reviewing bids and plan to start over the summer.
* Demolitions down North El Paso are now completed.

**Committee Reports**

* **President’s Communication –** President Link reminded everyone of the state Senate bill that will not let allow any state entity to require a mask. This will include ATU and will go into effect around the first part of August.
* **Budget Advisory –** No report
* **Scholarship –** No report
* **University Strategic Planning –** No report
* **Insurance Committee –** No report
* **IT Prioritization and Impact** – Judy Crouch
  + The Committee met Tuesday, May 4th.
  + Discussed Cares Act Funding and possible reimbursement for increases in Respondus exam seats & hot spots. Allow hot spots until August 1; after that, it will be transferred to the department & they will be responsible for cost.
  + 2-Factor ID for email was approved last week with a July 1st kickoff; will move groups one at a time; implemented to be security compliant; should cut down on phishing and other security concerns.
  + Discussed audits regarding compliance for security.
  + Discussed cost overages for Emma emails due to pandemic; Looking at possibility for reimbursement under COVID Cares Act Funding; Investigate how to control overages.
  + Computer Replacements: Due to reduction in budget, no longer a fee identified as a computer replacement fee. New 5-year budget does not have funding for new computers. Make sure EC is aware that we need funding long term for this.
  + Working to get Ellucian Network up to shift to the cloud in December.
  + Discussed a request to bring Mongoose under the IT budget. Committee members were asked to review and make a recommendation using the scoring rubric. Asked to turn in scoring review within two days.
  + Discussion on e-signatures; Can get very expensive; we currently do not have a university policy for e-signatures; some state policy still requires pen/ink signatures.
* **University Communication Working Group –** No report
* **Campus Space and Utilization –** No report
* **Green and Gold Cupboard –** No report
* **Staff Awards –** No report

**New Business**

*Staff Senate Vice President Election*

President Link opened the floor for nominations. Senator Rye nominated Angie Bell. Senator Simpson nominated herself. Senator Crouch nominated Secretary Beaird. Votes were submitted privately to President Link and Secretary Beaird was elected. The Senate then moved to nominate someone to replace Beaird’s position of secretary and Beaird nominated Senator Simpson. Since there were no other nominations, Senator Simpson was appointed.

*Committees*

* **President’s Communication** – Margie Link
* **Constitution and Bylaws –** Susan Johnson, Margie Link, Kaitlynn Beaird, Judy Crouch
* **Staff Handbook Committee –** Judy Crouch, Alicia Williams
* **Budget Advisory –** Margie Link
* **Scholarship –** Brittany Reves, Rachel Broussard, Amber, Kaitlin Ennis, Amber Meeks
* **University Strategic Planning –** No one appointed. Will appoint someone when they meet again.
* **Insurance Committee –** Angie Bell
* **IT Prioritization and Impact** – Judy Crouch
* **University Communication Working Group –** Alisha Williams
* **Campus Space and Utilization –** Dr. Birkner
* **Staff Awards –** Angie Bell
* **Grievance Committee –** Angie Bell, Rachel Broussard
* **Faculty Senate –** Brandi Duvall
* **COVID Task Force** - Tammy Rye
* **Green and Gold Cupboard –** Dissolved since it was closed.
* **Welfare Committee –** Judy Crouch said they never met. Dissolved.

President Link will send out an updated list.

**Old Business**

*Campus Restructure*

President Link asked for top three items for when we ask for a seat at the table. Senators discussed several items and Secretary Beaird asked that everyone send those to her directly and she will compile those for when we are able to meet with the mediator. President Link also shared that she and Beaird would be writing a memo requesting to also speak with the mediator.

*Staff Senate Constitution Committee*

This committee will meet in the coming weeks to discuss issues with Staff Senator participation in order to enable more people to serve. Secretary Beaird mentioned that several survey responses from FAMA were that they did not feel represented and that they currently have two senators from that area, but have attended very few—if any—meetings.

**Open Forum**

President Link asked if everyone would like to start back meeting in person beginning in the fall. Senator Rogers proposed that if/when we do start meeting back in person, we should also share a virtual invite. Senator Bell brought up room capacity issues and President Link agreed that we would need to consider that when planning.

Senator Standridge brought up Senator Hendrix accepting a new position in Academic Affairs. President Link said that since he filled Alan Parsons’ position, Hendrix will fill his Staff Senate position for Academic Affairs and we will have to hold an election for Hendrix’s position in Student Affairs. Secretary Beaird reminded President Link that we would need to fill two other positions due to lack of attendance at the meetings.

**Announcements**

Secretary Beaird announced that anonymous submissions will be included in the draft minutes for the month prior the upcoming meeting. She will include submissions from January 2021 until now in the May’s meeting minutes. She will also upload the potential survey results on the website to get more feedback for the real survey that will be sent out in the spring.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 2nd at 10 a.m.

**Meeting Adjourned**

Senator Johnson filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Senator Duvall seconded the motion. The Senate voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaitlynn Beaird, Secretary

**Anonymous Submissions: January 01, 2021 – May 26, 2021**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 02/11/2021 | Staff | Will the senate meetings be open to all staff? During this trying time, it would be nice to be able to attend. |
| 02/18/2021 | Prefer not to say | I just wanted to vent. It would have been nice to just have the snow days. Knowing people are without power and being forced into using their pto cause of it doesn't seem fair. I completely understand that we do need to work and we are able to work from home which is a blessing, but pre-Covid we would've just been off. I think it would've boosted morale some like when we got random mental health days during the summer. |
| 02/24/2021 | Faculty | I have a concern about the current inclement weather policy, and urge the Staff Senate to advocate for its revision. In particular, there are two items that disturb me:  1. In the current staff handbook, it describes employees specifically identified as critical personnel who may be required to work regardless of weather conditions. What is the procedure for designating certain employees 'critical' and when are they to be notified of that? During the last round of inclement weather, the university's physical campus closed, and yet some employees who were previously not identified as 'critical' were called in to campus the night before (library personnel and possibly Hull personnel). The decision to designate an employee 'critical' or even a department 'critical' should be made when the employee is hired or long before the severe weather arrives.  2. The compensation for critical personnel seems unfair and inadequate compared to other universities. Here, critical personnel are allowed excused time off at a later date, but only within the same pay period. If inclement weather strikes at the end of the month, these employees receive no additional compensation. At other universities, these employees are actually rewarded for the critical service they provide and the risk they take to brave the elements. At the University of Arkansas, essential workers received their regular pay plus Inclement Pay: payment for all hours worked during that period at an hourly rate equal to the maximum level for their position of the Classified Pay Grid for the State of Arkansas or at time and one-half of their current rate |
| 03/05/2021 | Staff | Morale and staff wellbeing have been brought up recently. I do believe there are things that the university could do improve staff satisfaction and wellbeing without having to increase salary or benefit costs. While one-time events such as staff appreciation night have some benefit to moral, offering ongoing, reoccurring opportunities for staff to socialize can help build social connections and a sense of community. Feeling that you have friends at the workplace and are part of a social group is consistently cited as top factor in workplace satisfaction. It is also shown to increase productivity and reduce stress. Offering regular activities such as staff only trivia nights, book clubs, group walks, sports and the like can have a big impact. Cost would be minimal to nothing depending on the activity. Although I admit COVID limits what we can do at the moment.  The other area where I think we could make some improvement is in promoting professional and personal development. As it stands, the closest thing we have to professional development for the staff is periodic refresher training in skills we need for our current positions. There is no program to offer training or skill development that would make it easier for a staff member to advance in their career at ATU. While the opportunities for career advancement at ATU are limited, I do believe that offering skills seminars for interested staff members, particularly those who arenÃ¢Â€Â™t able to make the time commitment to attend regular classes, could make a difference. Things like web design, accounting principles, or even the more advanced features of Microsoft 365, could have a lot of value to some staff members. It would be nice to feel like the university has some investment in my success as an individual and not just in my function. |
| 03/10/2021 | Staff | I have not received any correspondence from my Senate rep since October. Academic Affairs division. |
| 03/10/2021 | Staff | I have not received any correspondence from my Senate rep since October. Academic Affairs division. |
| 03/18/2021 | Faculty | I urge the Staff Senate to strongly condemn the proposed Tuition benefit plan, namely for the following reasons:  The expectation that employees should pay 25% of tuition is NOT in keeping with most universities in the state, and it is on the lower end of benefit. This discount at UCA is 80%, UAF=90%, UALR=90%, SAU=100%, Henderson= 100%. ASU Jonesboro is the ONLY 4 year public I can find at 75%.  2. The fact that they are still including any penalty for failure or withdrawal is totally out of line with other institutions, and represents a punitive action on a BENEFIT!!!!! This will enable employees to be in significant debt to their employer, often for circumstances beyond their control.  3. Any tuition or fees owed to the university ought to be payroll deduction eligible across the length of a semester.  Please strongly oppose these changes for the benefit of staff. |
| 03/18/2021 | Faculty | I would strongly recommend the Staff Senate urge the administration to notify employees who will be laid off due to restructuring much, much sooner than the minimum of 30 days prior to the end of their contract. It is unethical and inhumane and probably unfeasible to sit on this information that employees need to make long-range plans that are best for their family. They should be notified IMMEDIATELY if their employment is ending. This gives them time to find alternative employment, scale back major purchasing decisions, postpone other life decisions, etc. I find appalling to delay any further if they know now who is not being kept on. People need time to plan, and need not find out through rumor or speculation. It's like waiting on a cancer test result--the waiting is agony. And it is irresponsible to wait. |
| 03/18/2021 | Staff | Why would they change the faculty/staff waiver? It doesn’t take away from traditional students and it isn’t costing the university money. That was a huge benefit of being an employee at ATU. |
| 03/19/2021 | Staff | Since the EC is so adamant about pushing the benefits of reduced-time contracts for budget savings, I wonder how many of them have taken advantage of the program. Their salaries are so much higher than the staff members who must live in fear for the next two months about whether or not we will have a job come June 30th, that there might be some significant savings if all EC went to 80% time an salary. |
| 03/24/2021 | Staff | Recommend discussion of vote of no confidence for president. |
| 03/24/2021 | Staff | What is a Vote of No Confidence and is that a possibility for staff and faculty at ATU? |
| 03/24/2021 | Staff | Could staff senate put forward a vote of no confidence in our president?.... I’ve heard rumblings from faculty members about this. |
| 03/25/2021 | Staff | Will the reconstruction decisions be based upon seniority? If not, why are vacant positions being posted and filled? |
| 03/30/2021 | Staff | Can current employees be grandfather into the classes at 100% like we were grandfather into the insurance? Especially the people who have be consistently taking courses semester after semester. |
| 03/30/2021 | Staff | Is it too late to make changes to our staff handbook to learn whether we will have a job before June 30th or 30 days before our contract is up? I know that in academics they will know in May because of their handbook, but I wish the university would have the decency and respect for their employees by giving those who are affected more than 30 days to know whether or not they need to look for employment elsewhere. |
| 03/31/2021 | Staff | The faculty and staff waiver changes are a disgrace. At no point was the staff even made aware they were looking at making those changes to even get some feedback. If they want to change it fine but grandfather in those staff and faculty members who have steadily been working to improve themselves. Some of us really can't afford the cost and now it will be over $500 per class with all the fees (that we do not benefit from) that we have to pay. A lot of staff came to work here for the benefit of free schooling and now that benefit is gone as well. |
| 04/01/2021 | Staff | Why isn't there a representative for athletics? |
| 04/06/2021 | Faculty | These are the questions I sent to the Faculty Senate, and I'm copying the Staff Senate as you represent the most vulnerable employees impacted by the restructuring process. Please use or disregard as you see fit:  In light of the recent announcement of restructuring and the layoffs soon to be announced, I would like to call upon the Faculty Senate to ask the following questions to Dr. Bowen, since she took none at the Ã¢Â€Â˜informational sessionÃ¢Â€Â™ the Friday before Spring Break:  1.Why will terminated employees not be fully informed of their future at Arkansas Tech sooner than the May 8th/June 1st deadlines? Dr. Bowen, you said some of them will be Ã¢Â€Â˜transitionedÃ¢Â€Â™ to other open positions, but why arenÃ¢Â€Â™t you telling them something NOW? It is unethical and it is not Ã¢Â€ÂœcompassionateÃ¢Â€Â to withhold this information from vulnerable staff and faculty. This this narrows the window wherein they can find alternative employment, increases fear and demoralization, and withholds vital information to help them plan for their future. For staff and adjuncts, living paycheck to paycheck, this is simply not enough time to save and prepare. Right now, there is an atmosphere of paranoia, rumor, and despair on campus. Much of this can be alleviated with direct, honest communication.  If Dr. Bowen does not answer this question in a satisfactory way, I urge the Senate to vote for resolutions demanding the notification of termination of employment IMMEDIATELY AND WITHOUT DELAY to impacted employees.  2.Why are departmental mergers and program closures not openly communicated to the university at large, as well as other stakeholders like our community and our state? Information has leaked out piecemeal, and gaps in transparency have been filled with rumors and suspicion. When UALR shuttered programs, they announced it in the stateÃ¢Â€Â™s newspaper, and they gave full interviews with data-driven justifications well in advance. If the administration is committed to transparency, then let your actions show thisÃ¢Â€Â”not just your words.  If Dr. Bowen does not answer this question in a satisfactory way, I urge the Senate to vote for resolutions demanding a full press release of all program closures and departmental mergers IMMEDIATELY to stakeholders of Arkansas Tech University.  3.Why were policies like the changes to tuition benefits, health insurance, & retirementÃ¢Â€Â”which are not personnel decisionsÃ¢Â€Â”not communicated to the respective governing bodies (e.g. Faculty and Staff Senate) before they were approved by the Board of Trustees? These policies do not require NDAÃ¢Â€Â™s to discuss. Feedback from stakeholders is essential to building better policies which can strike balance between financial health of the university and the recruitment and retention of good employees. If we are basing these policies on data, where is the data?  If Dr. Bowen does not answer this question in a satisfactory way, I urge the Senate to vote for the creation of a committeeÃ¢Â€Â”or task an existing, standing committeeÃ¢Â€Â”to review these policies, request the data justification for these policies, and implement potential resolutions of revision and/or resolutions of support for these new policies in the following year.  4. Why does the new Ã¢Â€ÂœOne-Stop ShopÃ¢Â€Â cost $200,000? If this is simply a reorganization of existing personnel into the Brown offices, what aditional costs could be associated with this reorganization?  If Dr. Bowen does not answer this question in a satisfactory way, I urge the Senate to vote for resolutions requesting full transparency for this new program, including the data used for the justification, and an itemized budget for these additional costs which can be shared with all stakeholders.  5. What are the circumstances surrounding the potential budgetary crisis of 2023? We are not facing a demographic cliff that yearÃ¢Â€Â”birth rates in Arkansas increased between 2003-2006. What is actual reason for the shortfall? No explanations were given at the informational session on Friday. Is this related to the recreation center construction?  If Dr. Bowen does not answer this question in a satisfactory way, I urge the Senate to vote for resolutions requesting transparency about our 2023 budget, well as the full cost analysis of the new recreation center, with numbers showing how much funding from E&G will go towards this new expenditure.  6. Why was Scholarship allowed to overspend their budget this year and in the recent years prior? Currently, scholarships are exceeding their budget by $1.5 million, according to the Board documents. According to the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee Report last fall, Ã¢Â€ÂœFindings on Academics and University FundingÃ¢Â€Â, they found that Ã¢Â€Âœ[Ã¢Â€Â¦] in 2018 and 2019, ATU overspent its scholarship budget by $1.016 million and $2.3 million respectively, even though the budget had increased by $120,000 in 2018 and by $1.012 million in 2019.Ã¢Â€Â Why is this overspending occurring and what are you going to do about it? These over-expenditures are built on the backs of vacant positions, future faculty and staff lay-offs, program cuts, and budget cuts to revenue-generating areas of campus. What is the university doing to reduce overspending in scholarships in the futureÃ¢Â€Â”particularly while Foundation publicly celebrates unprecedented gifts in scholarship fund-raising this past year?  If Dr. Bowen does not answer this question in a satisfactory way, I urge the Senate to vote for resolutions demanding accountability in scholarship spending, requesting budget reductions in E&G scholarship spending, and the implementation of safeguards against exceeding the Scholarship budget in the future.  7. If you, Dr. Bowen, were to leave the university today and take a job elsewhere, who would be the interim president of Arkansas Tech University? If you are out of town or on vacation, who do you currently name as the chief administrator in charge of ATU in your absence?  I urge the Senate to vote for resolutions demanding that the VPAA be named as the chief administrator in charge of the university when/if the president is out of town or otherwise leaves the university.  Furthermore, I urge the Faculty Senate to pass resolutions requesting that the title of VPAA be elevated to Provost by next year.  If these resolutions fail to produce meaningful actions from the president and administration prior to the May Faculty Senate Meeting, it should indicate to the Faculty Senate that the President is not interested in true shared governance or distributive leadership. I would then urge the Senate to vote NO CONFIDENCE in the administration, particularly the President.  This restructuring process represents a significant failure on the part of administration. If we are at the point of laying off faculty and staff, then I think we have failed as an institution, administratively. Faculty Senate needs to speak for the weak and for the untenuredÃ¢Â€Â”for the vulnerable and for those who about to lose their jobs. You are our representative voice. Now is the time for action and boldness. What do we have left to lose?  If the Faculty Senate fails to boldly ask these questions, pass any meaningful resolution in the remaining months of this year, or hold any member of the Tech administration accountable for this failure, then perhaps the faculty should hold a vote of Ã¢Â€ÂœNo ConfidenceÃ¢Â€Â in the Faculty Senate and, especially, the SenateÃ¢Â€Â™s leadership.  IÃ¢Â€Â™m sending a copy of this message to the entire Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate. IÃ¢Â€Â™m also posting this to the Staff Senate anonymous comment page in the hopes that someone will say or do something to speak up for the people we will lose and the lives this administration has shattered.  Sincerely,  Do Something. |
| 04/06/2021 | Staff | If not too late I would like a couple of questions to be added.  1. Last year Dr. Bowen made reference to the financial turmoil that Henderson State and UALR were in. Those University's fired their presidents and are now doing much better. When is someone going to present a Vote of No Confidence? This should have been done last year.  2. ATU's financial problems started long before this pandemic and records would back that statement. I think records would show they started when Dr. Bowen came and when 6 new Executive positions were created. Again, when will someone, anyone present a Vote of No Confidenc |
| 04/06/2021 | Staff | Dr. Bowen's monthly check is more than what most staff make in a year. |
| 04/07/2021 | Prefer not to say | Please look into former ATU employees still be paid when we're about to lay off current employees. Example: Steve Mullins |
| 04/08/2021 | Faculty | Hi, I have some questions about this new tuition benefit policy.  First, according to the presentation to the Board of Trustees, the change in tuition benefit policy will result in an efficiency/saving of $159,636. What is this number, exactly, and how did Mr. Branson come up with this figure?  Is this expected revenue due to the assumption that current employees taking classes will continue taking classes and will now be paying money to the university for the privilege?  Did Mr. Branson poll or survey current recipients of the tuition benefit to determine if they will continue to take classes at 25%-50% of tuition plus full fee costs?  How will a staff employee at ATU afford to pay for one class at the 25% undergraduate tuition waiver rate + fees? For a single 3-hour undergraduate class, this is $174 in tuition and $262.50 for a total of $436.50. For a 3-hour graduate class at 50% tuition, this is $438 in graduate tuition plus $262.50 in fees, for a total of $700.50.  Mr. Branson, do you think this is affordable for classified employees? Especially those who are making $22,433? Or $21,453? Are you betting $159,636 that it is?  Furthermore, why do we have a punishment within a benefit? When a regular student at Arkansas Tech withdraws from a course after the last day to withdraw for a refund, do they have pay back any Arkansas Tech scholarships they have received? If not, why should our employees and their dependents? When a student fails a class, do they have to pay back their Tech scholarships? Why should our employees?  When you said this new revised policy was comparable to employee tuition policies at other universities, which universities were you comparing us to? Because coupled with the penalties for failure and withdrawal and the new charges for tuition, we now have the worst tuition benefit in the state.  How do we now retain and recruit employees with our abysmal salaries for classified staff, a cost-prohibitive health plan, a weakened retirement plan, and the worst tuition benefit policy in the stateÃ¢Â€Â”a policy so bad that it places a financial risk on employees who attempt get an education while working their full-time job?  It just looks like you are trying to make a buck on the backs of your employees who are just trying to better themselves through education. We’re number 1 in social mobility for everyone but our own staff. |
| 04/09/2021 | Staff | Regarding the reconstruction, what is the planned percentage across the board of staff/faculty layoffs? |
| 04/09/2021 | Staff | We keep hearing that our tuition waiver policy was greater than other surrounding institutions, but is it fair to choose only one benefit to compare? Shouldn't we have put the entire benefit packages together and then compare them? How does our insurance cost/coverage compare to surrounding institutions? Are those things being compared fairly? We still have to be able to recruit and retain valuable faculty/staff to serve students and provide the service excellence culture we have established. |
| 04/09/2021 | Prefer not to say | Will there be a campus announcement from the EC that departmental services could be less efficient or slower as a result of the EC's decision regarding cuts? Some offices had to make cuts based on a percentage they were required to meet, not on need. Faculty and staff expect quick efficient departmental service and technological advances that will not be made available as a result of these decisions. It would go a long way toward customer service relations if the campus is made aware of that fact. For example, why doesn't the University have a digital signature software after a year of social distancing? Why is ATU one of the only universities in AR without travel software? |
| 04/09/2021 | Staff | In reference to the meeting with Dr. Bowen and Mr. Walter Branson on March 9: Restructuring: The President expressed during the F/S waiver discussion that it can take up to a year before one is properly trained and knows job duties, busy times, etc... Can the Administration comment on how the “One Stop Shop” is supposed to be in action by fall 2021 using that same logic? It seems more time would be necessary, especially considering not one specific answer has been given to staff about what this shop truly looks like and will function. Is Administration waiting until June 30 to start working on it because that’s how it appears. I am disappointed in EC’s lack of leadership to take a pay cut or lead by example for furloughs in any aspect. It was insulting to be told they are underpaid, just like we are underpaid. It was insulting to hear our salaries are somewhat competitive for locals in terms of recruitment, but not for jobs where out of state recruitment is important (example: administration) – Local or not, are we not all worth a competitive salary? Apparently not. If the F/S waiver changes saved 2-4 positions, how many would have been saved with cuts to EC’s salaries? “One Stop Shop” – Can we see the “hours of research” done on schools that have this model? How do these schools compare to ATU in terms of size, retention, programs offered, personnel, etc...? I have experienced this model at another institution and have A LOT of concerns for staff and students. Someone asked about seeing the full budget and was told to look at the upcoming budget. That’s not an answer – Can the budget be shared? So far, several hard questions to the President have been answered with anecdotes and stories of where the Administration previously worked. I know more about their previous jobs than what is about to happen to the staff at ATU. There is a lot of deflection and those are not the factual, calculated, evidence-based answers we are looking for when asking about decisions in workforce reductions and restructuring. F/S Waiver: I’d like to express my disappointment in the Board and EC for not allowing recent hires to participate in furthering their education. Our industry and passion is education, including promoting education among ourselves and colleagues. A simple, “New hire dates on or after July 1, 2021, must wait the full year” is more acceptable and trackable (since in the meeting it was discussed that tracking start dates for grandfathering in employees is too difficult in the system). July 1 is a new year and pretty much knocks out summer enrollment to grandfather in early. Morale: Staff Senate did an excellent job hosting the meeting. You all should be proud. This is what staff want from our Senate. Hold the Administration accountable, publicly, and help provide DIRECT communication to them. I doubt one person from the 270+ in that meeting sleeps any better tonight, but don’t try to offer us an appreciation cookie like EC tried to do – instead, keep asking the tough questions. Sincerely, Anonymous |
| 04/12/2021 | Prefer not to say | If and when a staff member receives notice that their position will be terminated, will sick leave be able to be used until final day? |
| 04/15/2021 | Staff | I would like to see the formation of a task force to draft a permanent “work from home” policy that allows managers discretion and flexibility on how to manage their workforce. We have proven that we can be very production working remotely and, for several employees, provide substantial savings and a much better balance of work to family time. I know some areas will not be well suited to remote work due to the nature of their duties. This should not preclude other areas from implementing a common sense “work from home” policy that would benefit the employee and the university. |
| 04/21/2021 | Staff | I think if a person on the HR staff is going to apply for an internal position they should have to decide within 24 hours of the job being posted and if applying, they need to have their access removed from viewing applicant information. This gives them an unfair advantage over the applicant pool and preparing for an interview. |
| 04/28/2021 | Staff | To our Staff Senate representatives:  I hope this letter finds you all well; I also hope you take the time to read it despite its length. Please feel free to share it with colleagues if you so choose.  I would like to preface my remarks with - I love ATU. I love my job. I love my coworkers. I have worked at Tech for many years; God-willing, I will work at Tech many more. I am tired, though. ArenÃ¢Â€Â™t you all? I am tired, and I am mentally exhausted. The angst faculty feel and have voiced in Faculty Senate (even broaching the subject of a vote of no-confidence in Dr. Bowen at last monthÃ¢Â€Â™s meeting) is felt wholly by staff as well. I would argue we feel it even more. We are the ones supervisors consult when more budget cuts must be made, and money must be found/turned back from colleges and departments. Though faculty and supervisors converse with us about what is going on, we have no voice. The last Staff and Faculty Senate meetings emphasized that many across campus are discouraged, exhausted, and frustrated. We all want guidance and answers. We also want to believe there is light at the end of our tunnel.  Morale is terribly low, and it has been for a while. It started pre-pandemic. I am irritated many of TechÃ¢Â€Â™s issues are being blamed on the global pandemic. Example: Multiple staff members are privy to budget information and TechÃ¢Â€Â™s financial situation long before COVID hit. Colleges and departments have been turning back money for 2-3 years now, trying to cut where possible. However, the cuts are now impacting peopleÃ¢Â€Â™s livelihoods because there is nothing else left. We are also going into year three or four where classified staff have not received merit bonuses based on annual evaluations. Yet, we must still have those evaluations completed by our supervisors. While the global pandemic may have exacerbated the UniversityÃ¢Â€Â™s current financial woes, it did not cause them. Tech knew enrollment would decline and did nothing to plan for it. Now, it is too late. ATU has cut millions of dollars, and I do not believe those cuts will be a one-time occurrence.  Despite that, we all strive to do our very best daily. We understand what it takes for our students to succeed. However, the ATU Dr. Bowen has created does not promote flourishing; in fact, the environment is becoming toxic. Change is inevitable and can be positive, but there is very little good to be seen. Truly. Talk to those around you. Be open and honest with each other. We all wear multiple hats, and perform our expected jobs gladly. But, we do those things for our studentsÃ¢Â€Â”not for Executive Council or the Board of Trustees.  I hope one day the Board of Trustees quits holding Ã¢Â€ÂœopenÃ¢Â€Â meetings and closing them halfway through to go into executive session. I was sorely disappointed in the Board members when they passed every action item on the agenda without discussion during the last meeting. We now find ourselves trying to turn some BoT decisions back for review. I am grateful Dr. Bowen is trying to find funds to keep the current tuition and fee waiver; however, the recent policy change should never have gone before the Board. How much will be taken from staff (even just the Ã¢Â€Âœ10% that use it [the tuition/fee waiver]Ã¢Â€Â) before we feel enough is enough?  Faculty Senate has been discussing the possible no-confidence vote for well over a year. Yet, it is being postponed until October. When will faculty and staff stop allowing ourselves to be dissuaded from action? Where are those who can and will advocate for us? As individual employees, staff may not have a voice. However, I believe we do collectivelyÃ¢Â€Â”especially since we are the largest employee group at ATU.  I know we are all tired. Some physically, some mentally, and a lot of us Ã¢Â€Â“ both. However, we are also tired of meaningless words and inaction. It is nice to make things seem pretty. EC and Dr. Bowen are skilled in that art. Yet, the University is never proactive.  I learned yesterday the Green and Gold Cupboard closed. Were you aware staff were using the Cupboard as much as students? That should unsettle us all. Yet, at the last Staff Senate meeting, EC said they could not take a pay cut because they already make 1/3 less than their peers at other institutions. How do you think such an assertion made staff feel given the extremely low wages many of us earn? I am not advocating for pay increases, but I do hope we can all be paid fairly one day (and at the very least earn a livable wage).  I have yet to hear Dr. Bowen take responsibility for the position ATU finds itself in now. Instead, blame is cast on everyone and everything else while she does not accept any personal responsibility. If she is not ultimately responsible, who is? Do I feel she is indifferent to faculty and staff concerns? Yes. Do I believe her decisions will soon negatively impact our students? Yes. Do I feel like ATU hiring a mediator to facilitate conversations between faculty and EC will make a difference by October? No. I also do not know where ATU will find the money to hire a mediator. Moreover, I do not think anything will be Ã¢Â€ÂœfixedÃ¢Â€Â from August to October (when faculty are actually on contract). The new Ã¢Â€ÂœplanÃ¢Â€Â simply means another six months of waiting for decisions to be made and action to be taken.  I thank Staff Senate (as well as Faculty Senate) for the work done. However, it is imperative we remember: for our voice to matter, we must actually use it. |
| 05/05/2021 | Prefer not to say | Budget suggestion: when we are remote (example half Fridays and night time) shut off the lights in offices and hallways. Brown Hall is lit up like a Christmas tree every second of the day. |
| 05/06/2021 | Prefer not to say | It would be nice to have random mental health Friday's over the summer again. Especially since we are working in office when we have less students coming into the offices. |
| 05/21/2021 | Staff | Mental health Fridays. please. |