

Staff Senate Minutes

March 6, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

President Kristian Thompson called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Thursday March 6, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in a hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual online meeting.

ROLL CALL

Senators Present:

Sabrina Anwar
Peggy Ayers
Megan Bell
Rachel Broussard
Bethany Brown
Kate Darr

Slade Dupuy
Bonnie Freeman
Connie Herring
Kim Hilliard
Katie Hook
Kacie Lopez

Whitney Moore
Nick Schluterman
Mackenzie Taylor
Kristian Thompson
Scott Tomlin

Senators Absent:

Jenna Bradley
Shelly Hall
Tanda Morrison

Cody Neal
Cesiley Rideau
Miranda Senn

Visitor(s):

Amanda Gardner
Andrea Eubanks
Brandi Tripp
Eric Walker
Jennifer Taylor
Joceline Argueta
Julia Pope
Kathleen Martin
Kim McKown
Kimberly Turner

Kristy Davis
Marcia Brown
Marika Lederman
Miranda Marin
Susan Johnson
Tammy Weaver
Traci Halsted
Valli Ashcraft
Victoria Tomlin

Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes from the February 6, 2025 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Ayers filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Hilliard seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

Senate Discussion

During Spring Break the university will observe a Compressed Work Week (formally known as Summer Hours). Be sure to discuss your schedule with your supervisor on that.

During our April meeting, we will be nominating and selecting officers for the upcoming year. Those officers will start July 1, 2025. Please consider who you'd like to have in the officer positions as well as if you'd like to serve in any of the roles. In our May meeting, we will announce the opening of nominations for new officers on Staff Senate. We will send out a list of senators that will be rolling off this year as well as the number of nominees needed for each division. Please take some time to think of who you'd like to see on Staff Senate for the next few years.

Wednesday March 12th at 10, Staff Senate will have the opportunity to tour the Student Union. If you would like to go, please let Connie or any officer know. We have to have a head count so they can provide the adequate number of hard hats needed.

Committee Updates:

- Campus Space & Utilization
 - No update
- Emergency Management & Safety
 - Will have an update next meeting
- Access and Equity Committee
 - No update
- International Travel Advisory Council
 - Will have an update next meeting
- Technology Prioritization
 - No update
- Insurance, Benefits, & Wellness
 - Confirmed that the end of year claims was higher than typical but not out of the range of normal.
 - Discussed the pros and cons of going self-insured vs fully insured and if we even make a good candidate for that transition.
- Presidential Communication
 - Update given on some of our open positions: HR Director, VP for Advancement, and VP of Student Affairs
 - Announced that Amy Pennington will be the interim VP of Student Affairs
- Staff Senate Fundraising
 - Looking for money to get the cookbook going
 - Discussed the option of preselling vs traditional sales
 - Hoping to have these printed this month
 - Looking to sell the books for \$15 each

- Mulling around options on what to do with the money once we have it
 - Tailgating
 - Scholarship
 - Guest speakers for employee wellness
 - Staff Senate Award winner banquet
 - Peggy and Bethany will look into their avenues to see if it is an option to have an account for Staff Senate or if there is an existing account out there
- Faculty/Staff Senate Waiver
 - Committee has had the Faculty Senate's chair choice join and wanted to welcome Susan West
 - The committee was able to sort through and look at the initial data they were provided and have made some preliminary conclusions
 - When the policy changed in 2018, there was a significant drop in the number of employees that took advantage of the waiver
 - Despite the fact that the policy change went into place in order to save the university money, it costs more money since the change due to tuition increases
 - Grade point averages have increased since the policy changed
 - The committee also took a deep dive into where the money comes from and what funds are allocated for the waiver. They got some great insight thanks to Matt Fraser in Budget
 - Current considerations for policy changes as follows
 - Removing the financial penalty for unsuccessful classes
 - Limit on class hours taken should be tied to performance evaluations and academic progress rather than an arbitrary number
 - A final appeal process be set in place for if a supervisor denies the request for classes
 - "Let's have a policy that's clearly, fairly, and generously provides a path whereby those that are eligible can easily get the benefit, save some money, and advance their education. This benefit is supposed to create goodwill not frustration."
 - Hoping to have a plan available to the BOT at their June meeting
- Strategic Planning
 - Thank you to everyone that participated in the survey that went out
 - If you missed it there will be more opportunities in the near future
 - Where do we want to be, as an institution, in 2030?
 - What challenges do we anticipate that we will face from 2025 to 2030?
 - Coming out of the survey, it looks like there are 7 themes that are important to everyone. We will use these themes to create our goals.
 - Academic quality and student success
 - Facilities and infrastructure
 - Comprehensive stakeholder partnerships
 - Creation of a positive and supportive culture on campus
 - Strategic positioning withing the market of higher education
 - Financial stability and sustainability

Concerns & Questions brought to Staff Senate

Employees should not have to come to work and freeze. It is 65 degrees in our offices daily. It is uncomfortable and hard to work. We'd like to get the situation fixed.	Please let Connie know the building name and room number(s) and we will take it to Drew to get fixed. If anyone ever has this problem, you need only to reach out by putting in a ticket, sending an email to Drew or Josh Carey, or giving them a call.
I was wondering if it would be possible to have staff be paid biweekly. If not, I would like to know the reasoning and purpose that we do not.	We have 3 employees staffed in payroll. If we paid biweekly, we'd be doubling the amount of timesheets they'd have to enter and audit. We would also be doubling the amount of payroll runs the department would have to complete, as well as bank transactions. The decision was made years ago to pay employees once a month when downsizing that department and making the process the most efficient and cost saving way for the university.

Meeting Adjourned

At 9:27 am Senator Darr made a motion to adjourn, and Senator Schluterman seconded. President Thompson concluded the March 6, 2025 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Whitney Moore, Secretary