

## Staff Senate Minutes

April 4, 2024

### CALL TO ORDER

President Kristian Thompson called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Thursday April 4, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. in a hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual online meeting.

### ROLL CALL

#### Senators Present:

Sabrina Anwar  
Peggy Ayers  
Bethany Brown  
Deidra Dillard  
Slade Dupuy  
Connie Herring

Kim Hilliard  
Kacie Lopez  
Katie Hook  
Amber Jacimore  
Whitney Moore  
Tanda Morrison

Tammy Rye  
Miranda Senn  
Kristian Thompson  
Scott Tomlin

#### Senators Absent:

Rachel Broussard

Krystal Manning

Cody Neal

#### Visitor(s):

Amber Meeks  
Angela Westbrook  
George Brooks  
Julia Pope  
Kim McKown

Melissa Riffle  
Michelle Price  
Nichole Edwards  
Tammy Weaver  
Suzanne McCall

### **Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the March 7, 2024 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Hilliard filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Tomlin seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

### **Special Guest**

EC member Laury Fiorello

### **Special Report**

As this budget year comes to a close and the new budget year quickly approaches, Ms. Fiorello wanted to provide us with some updates as it pertains to the staff. One update that is all but finalized, is to alter and shift the insurance premium tiers. Currently, there is a \$0 option for those that make less than \$35,000 a year. To provide a more economical option, we will be shifting the \$0 premium cap to those who make less than \$50,000 a year. Individuals would be able to choose that insurance option during open enrollment at the end of October/beginning of November. It would take effect January 2025.

Additionally, Ms. Fiorello mentioned that she is continually encouraging supervisors to update job descriptions and CUPA titles so that we can develop a pay plan. We need to know where our goal is to be able to strive to achieve it. Dr. Jones is hoping to find a pool of money in the fiscal year 2025 to be able to do salary increases and/or COLA increases.

As we all know, our budget is strongly tied to our enrollment. We are expecting a difficult enrollment season for Fall 24 due to the issues FAFSA was having across the nation. FAFSA applications were being delayed everywhere which will delay the applications to schools. It is important to note that ALL schools will be experiencing a delay in applications for the upcoming enrollment period.

Construction projects continue across campus. We have about 10 projects that are bond funded that we will see starting in the next few months. While these are not “pretty” projects, they are maintenance projects to keep our campus functioning. The boiler system is one example of this. We will continue to see maintenance and deferred maintenance added to the capital improvement plan in order to reduce the need for emergency maintenance events.

The new blueprint designs for the student union should be done in about 4-6 weeks. If everything goes according to plan, we should see movement on the construction site shortly after July. Mr. Ferguson, who used to be an employee in Student Affairs and was (and continues to be) an advocate for students, has made a significant donation to the student union. As a thank you, the student union will be named the Ferguson Student Union. The estimated completion date continues to be between March 2026 and August 2026. Due to the construction that will be happening with the student union, the entrance project has been postponed with an unknown projected start date.

Ms. Fiorello wanted to close by giving Staff Senate a “pat on the back” for introducing the Staff Senate Appreciation Awards to our staff for the first time. The recipients will be notified today, after the Staff Senate meeting that they will be receiving the awards. These individuals will be recognized at our end of year Staff Senate Luncheon as well as graduation.

### **Senate Discussion**

We have been discussing the idea of updating our Constitution regarding the report position. We've been throwing around the thought of if we want to keep it and alter the description or eliminate it all together. Other universities do not have this position. Currently, the description reads that the reporter assists with the website, produces a Staff Senate newsletter, and acts in the Secretary's absence. If we kept the position, we'd want to shift the website role to be exclusively the responsibility of the reporter rather than just assisting. We also have not had a newsletter since 2015. We post our recordings online and we post the minutes. We don't really see the need in also having a newsletter. So, to recap, the Reporter's new description would be to maintain the Staff Senate website and be the Secretary's backup.

President Thompson opened the floor to any motions to vote on changing the description for the reporter. Senator Hilliard made the motion and Senator Hook seconded it. We then asked for votes on changing the description and it was unanimously voted to change it.

It is time to nominate and elect next year's officers! Senators went into a breakout session since only senators are able to nominate and vote on officers. When we came back from the break out session, we had the results for next year's officers.

President will continue to be Kristian Thompson  
Vice President will continue to be Connie Herring  
Secretary will continue to be Whitney Moore  
Reporter will be Kim Hilliard

We are all very excited for what this next year holds!

#### Committee Updates:

- Budget Advisory
  - Committee met and discussed differential fees again, scholarship management updates, and a reminder to update job descriptions for employees.
- Campus Space & Utilization
  - No update
- Emergency Management & Safety
  - No update in Rachel's absence
- Access and Equity Committee
  - No update in Rachel's absence
- International Travel Advisory Council
  - No update
- Technology Prioritization
  - No update
- Insurance, Benefits, & Wellness
  - No update
- Presidential Communication
  - There was an update given on the Chancellor job opening. There have been 3 finalists invited to Ozark campus to interview. For the ATCC director opening, there are 5 interviews scheduled for the first round. Construction updates were given. Then a reminder that Performance Evaluations are due March 31<sup>st</sup>. April 25<sup>th</sup> at 8am there will be an ATU plant sale. Also, we are all encouraged to watch the Presidential

Communication meeting. There is always good information coming from the meeting and it is very relevant to all of us.

- Eclipse Planning
  - We are almost there! This committee has worked so hard to ensure we are as ready as we can be for the big day! As far as how employees should prepare; act like it is a snow day. Go get gas, groceries, prescriptions if needed, etc. We will be virtual the second half of the day Friday and all day Monday and Tuesday. Be safe and be aware of your surroundings. There are a lot of events happening on campus and around town. This is a once in a lifetime experience so let's take advantage of it! There are free eclipse glasses all over campus.

**Concerns & Questions brought to Staff Senate**

I would love for Staff Senate to incorporate on campus guest speakers and educational events that includes topics like financial planning, retirement, healthcare, caring for elderly loved ones while working full time, caring for young adults while working full time, forming healthy habits etc. All of these would assist with work life balance and show support for employees dealing with these issues.	We are looking into possibly doing something like this quarterly. We are investigating on how we can work to make this possible as we think it is a splendid idea. We are also going to try to find videos on these topics that we can post on our website that employees can watch and rewatch at their convenience This also ties into the Health and Wellness program that HR is looking into and trying to make active.
There has been a question raised to us about closing campus at 3pm on Fridays.	We are investigating this option and seeing what we can find out. We will be bringing this up the next time we have a meeting with Dr. Jones.
We would love to see a sidewalk put in from Doc Bryan to the post office. Currently, you either have to walk on the street or in the grass or mud.	This project has been approved and will begin as soon as the eclipse is over. Thank you to Drew and his team for hearing us and taking care of it!

**Meeting Adjourned**

At 10:04 am Senator Senn made a motion to adjourn, and Senator Hilliard seconded. President Thompson concluded the April 4, 2024 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Whitney Moore, Secretary