

Staff Senate Minutes

October 3, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

President Kristian Thompson called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Thursday October 3, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. in a hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual online meeting.

ROLL CALL

Senators Present:

Sabrina Anwar
Peggy Ayers
Jenna Bradley
Rachel Broussard
Bethany Brown
Kate Carter
Slade Dupuy

Bonnie Freeman
Shelly Hall
Connie Herring
Kim Hilliard
Katie Hook
Amber Jacimore
Whitney Moore
Tanda Morrison

Cody Neal
Cesiley Rideau
Nick Schluterman
Miranda Senn
Mackenzie Taylor
Kristian Thompson
Scott Tomlin

Senators Absent:

Megan Bell

Kacie Lopez

Visitor(s):

Amber Meeks
Amy Brenner
Andrea Eubanks
Ashley Bryant
Brittany Rotenbury
Chelsea Martin

Kimberly Turner
Kylia Stewart-Davenport
Laura Rudolph
Lisa Clark
Susan Johnson
Victoria Tomlin

Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes from the August 1, 2024 meeting were distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Senator Hilliard filed a motion to accept the minutes. Senator Carter seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by Senate vote.

Senate Discussion

Senator Tomlin spoke on the topic of the Faculty Staff Waiver and the policy that regulates it. There have been constituent concerns regarding this policy as well as other committees looking at this policy. The consciences seem to be that employees feel like the process to get the waiver approved needs to be streamlined. Employees also feel as though the policy is too restrictive for those that are excelling in both their job and classes. Senator Tomlin is asking for us to look at this policy, as a group, and think about what we'd like to see in a new policy so that we can bring it to the appropriate individuals for review.

Senator Hook also expressed a great desire for this policy to be reviewed for its limitations and effectiveness. She has personally used the waiver to achieve her education and experienced hardship in trying to utilize the waiver. Hook shared that in 2019 she started at Tech and then decided to take some classes in the summer. She didn't have to pay anything except for some fees that were exempt from the waiver. She then took classes in the fall of 2019 which maxed out her 18-hour cap that is currently in place with the waiver. For that following spring semester, she decided that she wanted to go ahead and take more classes and just paid out of pocket for 15 hours of classes because her supervisor was ok with her taking them. Then she took two summer classes and tried to use the waiver but it was denied stating she had already reached the 18-hour cap. After going back and forth with some administration, they told her they would approve one class. She decided to go ahead and pay for the second class she was needing to take so she could get finished with her degree program quicker.

Then the next fall semester rolled around. She and her supervisor discussed her taking 15 hours that semester. Her work load hadn't declined and she'd kept a 4.0 GPA. Both parties decided it was fine for her to move forward with that course load. However, her waiver was denied again. There was a comment on the denial saying that she was taking too many hours for the semester. Hook decided to email the administrator and ask more questions. She stated that she was under the 18-hour fiscal cap and these classes were all she needed to graduate. She also asked for recommendations on how to move forward. The individual that emailed her back stated that they reviewed her request and the comment that was added previously. They said that the previous reviewer felt that 15 hours for a full-time staff member would be too much course load. They said however, if your supervisor supports you taking this large of a course load, you should get with them and appeal the denial. After some back and forth with Hook, her supervisor, and the administration, her waiver was finally approved.

Since these incidences, Hook has gone on to get her Master's degree and has not had any issues with the current administration. She just wanted to point out the issues that she has had with this waiver and how it has impacted her, and, most likely, others. She also pointed out that before the current policy, there was no limit on the number of hours an employee could take.

Senator Tomlin expressed that her case is one of the reasons he would like the opportunity to review and tune this policy. It shouldn't be written in a way that one administration could interpret it as one and another interpret it differently altogether. With that all being said, Senator Tomlin made a motion to vote to form a subcommittee that will look into this policy, get thoughts in mind, take pieces of the

conversation we had at this meeting, and return it again in November. Senator Hilliard seconded the motion. The senate voted to form this subcommittee and we voted yes unanimously. Senators Tomlin and Hook will head this committee. Senators Brown, Hall, Hilliard, and Dupuy volunteered to sit on the committee as well. Thank you to you all for diving into this policy for the benefit of our employees!

President Thompson wanted to bring us to speed on the raises that Dr. Jones has been discussing. We are waiting on the final numbers to come back to be able to determine exactly how much we'll have available for the raises. Dr. Jones also wanted to clarify how the raises will work. He will be looking to see what percentage of CUPA everyone is at. He will then look at the money that he has available for raises and determine how far he can raise the lowest CUPA levels to. So, if he looks at the money and realizes he can get everyone up to at least (random number) 75% CUPA, that is what he'll do. However, that means that those that are already above 75% CUPA, will not see a raise this cycle.

These raises are set to take place in January. For this year, the raises will come as a bonus. Then for fiscal year 2025 that raise will be included on your notice of appointment. This way, Payroll, HR, Academic Affairs, etc. will not have to redo everyone's notice of appointments in January. President Thompson also encourages you to review your job description and job title. If it does not reflect properly what your actual job is, you need to talk to your supervisor. They should be reviewing job descriptions and CUPA titles and updating them as needed. This way Dr. Jones can see what number we are reaching for accurately.

Lastly, President Thompson also wanted to update us on a section of our constitution he is wanting to take to the Board. It is mostly to update some language. For example, the constitution still talks about Classified and Non-Classified positions. We no longer have classified positions so the constitution should reflect correctly.

Committee Updates:

- Campus Space & Utilization
 - No update
- Emergency Management & Safety
 - No update
- Access and Equity Committee
 - No update
- International Travel Advisory Council
 - No update
- Technology Prioritization
 - No update
- Insurance, Benefits, & Wellness
 - No update
- Presidential Communication
 - Halloween Party 10/29 2-4pm, Open Enrollment opens 10/28, Dependent care flexible spending account available to enroll during open enrollment, Flu Clinic 10/8 and 10/16, Inauguration 10/11 at 4pm, 25th Anniversary Ross Pendergraft Library 10/30 at 3pm in RPL 300
- Staff Senate Fundraising Committee
 - We are in constant communication with Posey about what we are wanting for the publishing of the cookbook. Peggy has some feelers out with some sponsors.

Concerns & Questions brought to Staff Senate

We did get some constituent concerns but we are still waiting on answers for them so we are unable to go over them at this time.

Meeting Adjourned

At 9:49 am Senator Tomlin made a motion to adjourn, and Senator Hall seconded. President Thompson concluded the October 3, 2024 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Whitney Moore, Secretary

DRAFT