

Staff Senate Minutes

September 5, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

President Kristian Thompson called the Arkansas Tech University Staff Senate meeting to order on Thursday September 5, 2024 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 Carter
Slade Dupuy

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

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

Senators Absent:

Jenna Bradley
Bonnie Freeman

Shelly Hall

Visitor(s):

Alexis Scrimshire
Amber Meeks
Andrea Eubanks
Ashley Bryant
Chelsea Martin
Georgeanna Wright
Jennifer Fleming

Jennifer Taylor
Kim McKown
Michan Chowritmootoo
Michelle Price
Shanteal Scott
Traci Halsted
Vonda Dvorak

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.

Special Guest

Arkansas Tech University President-Dr. Russ Jones

Special Report

Dr. Jones started by giving out a big thank you to everyone that helped with Move In day, Freshman Orientation, and all of the August activities that we had. He received nothing but positive feedback from all of the events.

He also wanted to remind everyone about upcoming insurance changes, as well as lack of changes. For calendar year 2025, all health insurance premium increases have been absorbed by the university. Dental plans for employees only will remain \$0 but increased coverage for family members will rise slightly. Additionally, the salary tier premiums are being adjusted. If you make \$35,000-\$55,000, your monthly insurance cost will actually be going down in 2025. Starting in January, the lowest premium tier will be anything under \$55,000. ATU will also be offering a dependent care FSA. This will be like our current FSA or HSA cards that we have now that you can use for health-related purchases. However, this card will be for expenses like babysitters, daycares, preschool, etc. Be on the lookout for Open Enrollment guides for more information.

Today is the census day for enrollment. We are currently looking at just above 9000 students. This is down about 4% from last year but we were expecting 5%. So, this is not out of line from what we were thinking. Once we have all of the final numbers from enrollment, we will have a better idea of the situation we are in for giving out raises in January. The plan for distributing in these raises (either in the form of new contracts, or bonuses, etc.) is still being talked about.

Next, Dr. Jones spoke on the Strategic Plan. Our current plan is set to expire in June so we, as a university, are developing our next strategic plan that will run through 2028. A draft for our vision or mission statement has been written and Dr. Jones wants to share it with us and get our feedback. He wants a united recommendation from Staff Senate on word changes, unaddressed issues/questions, etc. He would like to have this nailed down before we leave for Thanksgiving break. See last page as a reference to this draft.* Once we have a final version of our mission statement, we are going to come up with 3-5 major goals of what we are going to do to accomplish the mission or vision. Furthermore, how do we get to where we want to be in 2028? These goals and ideas will be passed around for thoughts and evaluation as well. The goal is to have the completed Strategic Plan presented to the board in June.

Something else Dr. Jones asked Staff Senate to consider, the university is considering changing the back-to-school date of fall 2025 to Monday instead of Wednesday. If we brought the students back a couple of days sooner, we could give the students and faculty a whole week off at Thanksgiving break. This break would not affect staff since they will still be in office until November 28th (as per the Holiday Schedule posted on Human Resources, Resources and Forms, 2024 Holiday Schedule). However, this will match the Russellville School District schedule.

Senate Discussion

Senator Rideau brought up a concern/question/idea on parking for the Wellness Center for students seeking treatment. Currently, at Hull, as well as Doc Bryan, there are only spots for yellow and red parking. This means students that live on campus, and have green, orange, brown, etc. tags don't have a place to park. They either have to walk across campus while potentially injured and/or sick, or park in an unauthorized spot and risk getting a parking ticket that they may or may not be able to afford. We decided that a meeting with Tammy Dougan should be had regarding this issue.

Senator Tomlin also requested a discussion around the Faculty Staff Education policy be had at our next meeting. He, and several other senators, felt there was a need to discuss a possible motion to rewrite this policy. It is ambiguous and out of date. The senate agreed to put it on the agenda for October. Please see the policy quoted at the end of this document.**

Committee Updates:

- Campus Space & Utilization
 - No update
- Emergency Management & Safety
 - No update
- Access and Equity Committee
 - No update
- International Travel Advisory Council
 - Several short-term study abroad programs were approved. Visit <https://www.atu.edu/studyabroad/index.php> for more information.
- Technology Prioritization
 - No update
- Insurance, Benefits, & Wellness
 - No update
- Presidential Communication
 - No update
- Staff Senate Fundraising Committee
 - Posey printing has given us a quote for 50 two sided pages spiral bound. This would cost \$7-\$10 per book if we ordered between 100-200 books. We are creating a form to be able to allow recipe submissions. The name Tastes of Tech is being considered as a title. We are going to go back to Posey and ask the cost of printing pages in color. Peggy is going to look into possible sponsors to fund our book.

Concerns & Questions brought to Staff Senate

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| I'm reaching out for clarification and insight on the employee education limits for employees who are excelling in their continuing education efforts. Is there an opportunity to reverse the 18-hour cap on courses per academic year as well as the degree achievement limit as a benefit option? | The rules are listed in the Faculty and Staff Handbooks. The limits are set unless approved by the employee's VP. Also, keep in mind, can this work load be done while working full time? |
| If we are forced to pay for parking, can we have assigned parking spots? | No, we are not able to institute assigned parking spots. |

Meeting Adjourned

At 9:46 am Senator Tomlin made a motion to adjourn, and Senators Carter and Rideau seconded. President Thompson concluded the September 5, 2024 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Whitney Moore, Secretary

DRAFT