

**STAFF SENATE MEETING**

**November 14, 2023 – 3 p.m.**

**In Person; Union 341**

**Minutes**

**I. Call to Order**

A. 3:07 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

A. Quorum met

- Senators absent: Megan Cunningham, Parker Ellis, Rekha Gopalakrishnan, Katie Hermes, Christi Hestand, Katie Jenkins, Brittany Landau, Tammy McDaniel, John McIntire, Herman McKeiver, Tori Merkle, Madison Russell, Matt Wierzbicki

**III. VOTE to Approve Previous Meetings' Minutes**

A. Minutes approved unanimously

**IV. Guest Speakers**

A. Dr. Neal Smatresk, President, UNT

- University update
  - a) Fall enrollment is up. Board of Regents meeting went well.
  - b) Fac/Staff Holiday Party – Dec. 6 with Season of Giving efforts – opportunity to take hours off to volunteer and give back to the community.
  - c) Fac/Staff Emergency Relief Fund – for faculty and staff in need. Fundraising campaign led by Advancement – employees can donate to a fund. Small committee will evaluate requests, grant up to \$1,000 to those experiencing financial crisis.
- TUF Fund / Prop 5
  - a) Texas voted last week – UNT will essentially get \$15-16m per year (in function, that's not already earmarked). If we get research efforts in line, we will go up to \$40m in a couple of years. Helps those universities that don't get PUF funds (several billion dollars that fund the UT and A&M Systems).
  - b) We were thin – we maintain an average of about 70% of revenues go out to programs, students, etc., and 30% go to run everything else. We had to make a deal with the legislature to use it in a particular way. We've gotten more money because we've grown a lot. We're spending more because we've grown a lot.
  - c) This year will be the best year since Dr. Smatresk has been here – proposing and preparing for 4% merit. TUF is enabling that. This will help us retain people and get closer to midpoint salaries that we're hoping for. This is not equity – this is merit.
  - d) There will also be a salary study concluding next year – we'll hopefully be able to respond to equity results with salary increases (if enrollment holds up, which we expect it will).
  - e) We will be nominally spending more on research to help us get closer to the next funding tier.
  - f) STEM building – new. Science Research Building – remodeling.
  - g) Breathing room so we aren't as "broke."

- h) Minimum wage will be \$14.50/hour (hopefully). \$15/hour is our goal.
- i) Q: Do we have a timeline on how the TUF money will be used to raise staff wages? A: January 1. Merit is effective Dec. 1, so checks will be affected Jan. 1. Katy said the process has been compressed to expedite the process to get money into staff hands. Departments received spreadsheets yesterday. Take mandatory trainings and complete performance check-ins by Friday so you can be eligible for merit.
- j) Q: 4% merit – does that mean after everyone takes their portion? A: 4% would be the total amount available. Each department has to allocate their portion. Departments get to make the decision on what to do with the money that was allocated for those who are not eligible.
- k) Q: Noticed UNT got the lowest amount of TUF funds. A: Purely the research dollar amount. If we hit 2 years in a row, we'll get the same amount. The fund is well-built, and doesn't cost taxpayers anything. They'll expand and adjust every year without increasing taxes.
- l) Q: What is the 90% raise? A: What we had talked about last year was trying to get every staff member to 90% of mid-point. The first thing we're doing is the 4% merit, which will get us close. Then, we'll know what the gap is and be able to adjust accordingly. Likely won't happen for everyone this year.
- m) Q: Where are the guidelines for performance evaluations for new employees? A: Page on HR website – or even in MyUNT portal. Click "My Employees" to see at a glance if anyone falls into incomplete status. Green light, red light, etc.
- n) Q: Will a communication be going out about merit? A: Probably, but this has been a rush.
- o) Q: Why did the \$500 one-time bonus have a one-year requirement that excluded new hires? A: We have a fairly high turnover, so we wanted it to go to loyal UNT employees.
- p) Q: Bill that went through the legislative session for paid parental leave, but it explicitly excluded university employees. Who do we reach out to? A: Rotten deal. Legislators for your area – write your senators and representatives. Make it known. Will find an advocacy list for staff to share.

- Wellness is another concern. Use the holiday season to rest and relax. Work life balance is important.

- a) Q: Early work release next Wednesday? A: We no longer have the authority to make this decision without System.

- You matter. Thank you for all you do.

B. Marilyn Parrish, Associate Director of Training, Counseling & Testing Services, DSA

- General services
  - a) Crisis counseling, individual, groups. Free to students. We also do outreach and presentations. We can come and do that for your group (staff, students, etc.). Available for consultations. Call us.
- TogetherAll
  - a) Rolled out last spring. Peer support for students, faculty and staff. Chat anonymously. Hoping this would reach students who would otherwise hesitate asking for help. Those who may have been falling through the cracks. Use your UNT email address to register. Word is getting out – program is growing. This is a community, this is a way to support others in your community. We now have over 1,000 UNT community members registered.
- Campus Connect

- a) Suicide prevention training. Offered monthly. Can come speak with groups. Trying to equip all faculty, staff, students with info about how to help. There's one tomorrow. Feel free to join.
- My role is training. I'm available as a resource for you – for self or others. I can help you connect with the right resources.
- Q: When did TogetherAll start? A: DSA rolled it out last January.
- Q: Can we get a copy of this ppt? A: Yes, EC will send it out senators

C. Dr. Wendy Denman, Executive Director for University Centers & Events, DSA. Joined by Richard Owens, Director of Conference and Event Services

- Impending changes to student fees and Union room rates
  - a) Increasing prices – we haven't increased since the Union opened. In many ways our costs have increased – expenses have gone up. In 2015, enrollment has gone up, living on campus has increased, first time in college has increased.
  - b) We are an auxiliary. We pay our own and don't receive financial support, but we do have to give back. Cost share for all services we benefit from (PD, etc.). We also have to generate revenue so we can pay for maintenance and large capital expenses.
  - c) Want to increase staff salaries and student hourly salaries. Inflation has affected everything.
- Union reservations / scheduling
  - a) Big driving force is our student population. We wanted to make sure we had a better balance. We had 4,759 reservations by departments. 3,262 were student reservations. Noticed a major discrepancy. So we revamped and focused on three different areas:
    - (1) Foundational to university mission (NSO, Homecoming, Convocation, Commencement, First Flight Week, Presidential Events, etc.). There is a process to request consideration to see if your event can be considered "foundational."
    - (2) Special events are those that use major event spaces. Part of that is inviting people outside your organization, or perhaps it's annual/recurring, or even those that include guest speakers, contracted vendors, etc.
    - (3) Third category is for semesterly requests. This is mostly meetings, interviews, trainings, one-time events.
  - b) Q: Do you have the pricing list posted? A: Not published yet since it's not in effect. We're already quoting for those reservations after Jan. 1, but didn't want to confuse the public by posting twice.
  - c) Q: Will departments still get discounted rates? A: Yes
  - d) Q: Are there services for students to print in the Union? A: We don't have a print station in the Union. Students can go to the library to print. Design Works can design and print (for fees).

D. Senator Stephanie Myers, Digital Strategist, DSI

- Career Academy
  - a) For students, staff, and faculty. We have a partnership with Coursera. They have 129m users. We have two degree programs (BAAS and BS in General Business). Free microcredentials. Supplemental for a degree. Focus on specific skillsets like Data Analyst, Project Manager, Social Media Marketer, iOS Developer. Totally free. There are 17 specific certificate options. All can go on résumé. Great way for staff to upskill and reskill. Several faculty have used it as

extra credit. Please share. We are open to come do presentations to staff groups, if helpful.

b) Q: Is it also available for UNT alumni? A: UNT credentials. We're working with IT to get an answer about alumni.

c) Q: How to work with supervisors to work into regular hours? A: Up to supervisor.

## V. Constituency Concerns

A. Katy McDaniel, Assistant Vice Chancellor, UNT System and Chief HR Officer, UNT. Katy had to leave early, but Quortina gave the following updates:

- Chatter about UNT fac/staff and dependent scholarship changes – just a rumor.
- State employee health insurance does not include gender-affirming care. Negotiated by ERS. Katy will follow up with benefits coordinator and will give us an update once she hears back.
- Flexible schedules are encouraged, but it is not mandated. Encourage to talk with your supervisor. We'll invite her back to discuss this.
- Desire for separate faculty/staff recreation facilities. Addressed by Laurie Klein – Programming is available in student rec center (student fees support that facility and programs).

B. Q: Based on the message from the president, can we share the merit raises? A: I would hold, but if you're a supervisor, you can encourage compliance with all required trainings and ensure you're caught up on evals. Senator Toni Sorsdal said we're actively looking at Bridge completion and evals, so this is important. Senator Megan Wheeler said if they announced at Staff Senate general assembly meeting, it is not confidential, but still best to use words like, "intended" and "on track to" – anything can change.

C. Q: Faculty are actively getting notices from Bridge that they haven't completed, but they have. A: Senator Toni Sorsdal said to reach out to Compliance. Log into their Bridge account and review official transcript. FERPA, Ethics, Title IX, Cybersecurity are the required ones. Also, as a supervisor, you can check on all of your staff's statuses. Pull the transcripts in Bridge just to confirm.

D. Q: We received from HR the Total Rewards notification and some constituents have voiced that this gave them a negative feeling. A: Quortina to ask HR.

E. Q: Act was passed – Secure 2.0 – that allows employees to provide a 401K match. A: We'll confirm, but we're not a 401K entity, so this likely wouldn't pertain to us.

F. Q: Is there any kind of housing available for new employees? A: We'll find out.

G. Q: Are we able to get tax preparers to come in and help employees with their taxes? A: We'll find out.

## VI. Officer Reports

A. Chair Report – Quortina Phipps (she/her/hers)

- Update from President Smatresk regarding committee name. We can keep original committee's name. Will remain EDI. Happy to know that the president is very supportive.

B. Chair-Elect Report – Brittany Landau (she/her/hers)

- Unable to attend today's meeting, but Quortina gave the following update on the Athletics basketball tailgate. We are trying to have a family night for staff. One of

the games that was suggested was UNT vs. East Carolina on Sunday, March 3, 2024 at 2 p.m. Brittany will send more information (number of tickets, etc.) or bring to next meeting.

- C. Secretary/Treasurer Report – Megan Wheeler
  - Attendance – will be taken, per the Bylaws. The Bylaws are very specific about 3 absences being “excessive,” regardless of reason. Also required to reach out to those who have been absent.
  - Minutes – will be sent and voted on point forward. Will be posted online once approved.
  - Agenda – will also be posted online prior to the meeting.
  - Constituent Concerns – send ahead of time, if possible. Will allow us to have answers ready in the general assembly meeting and not have to wait a month.
  - Q: If I notice that my attendance record is wrong, can I request revision? A: Yes! Very happy to update that for anyone who finds a discrepancy.
- D. Communications Report – Kara Ottinger (she/her/hers)
- E. Parliamentarian Report – Anna Phelan (she/her/hers)
- F. Assessment Coordinator Report – Taylor Jordan (she/her/hers)
  - Thank you to those who sent out survey.
- G. Past Chair Report – Megan Cunningham (she/her/hers)

#### **VII. Standing Committee Chair Reports**

- A. Communications and Public Relations – Kara Ottinger
  - Social Media Presentation will be switching gears to semesterly (and not monthly).
- B. Membership and Assessment – John Bellon
  - We’re at 80% membership. However, we will not be running a special election. We will be postponed.
- C. Staff Success – Wendy Comfort / Toni Sorsdal
  - We will be updating Staff Success website. We’ve paused other activities for now until we know what is wanted and would be effective.
- D. Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion – Amber Brasher / Alexis Clingan
  - Our big update's already been covered. This is a great thing overall. Will send a really great message that we’re not changing our mission or purpose.

#### **VIII. Old Business**

- A. none

#### **IX. New Business**

- A. none

#### **X. Announcements**

- A. none

#### **XI. Adjournment / Dismissal to Group SWOT Activity**

- A. 4:32 p.m.