

Staff Senate Meeting Minutes  
March 12, 2025  
Willard J. Walker Hall, Room 504

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM by Vice Chair Autumn Parker, filling in for Roy Cordell, Chair.

II. Adoption of Agenda

- A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to adopt the March meeting agenda.

III. Roll Call – Vince Capps

IV. Campus Updates

i. Transit and Parking - Michella Cupello, on behalf of Gary Smith

a. Parking study results will be presented to the Executive Planning Group on March 17th. Next steps guidance is anticipated after that meeting.

b. During Spring Break (week of March 24th), Resident Reserved parking will be available for faculty and staff permit holders.

c. Lot 140, southeast of Reid Hall, will undergo core drilling in multiple spaces throughout Spring Break, affecting both Resident Reserved, and employee reserved sections. Several spaces will be closed each day in preparation for a new residence hall to be constructed in the area.

ii. Human Resources - Amy Ochoa

a. COLA and Merit Increases

- Details will be finalized and communicated after the planning meeting on March 13th.
- Official communications won't go out until the budget is approved.
- Currently looking at a 2.5% COLA and a merit pool for high impact merit, not for everyone.

b. Catastrophic Leave Plan Update

- Issue is on the radar of the new UA System President and UA System Director of Benefits. They have a plan to review it but no decisions have been finalized.
- The new Director of Benefits offered to come meet with Staff Senate and Faculty Senate executive committees next month for a listening session.

c. Performance Management

- A full-scale revamp of the performance management process for faculty and staff is being undertaken with the help of a third-party vendor.
- This is a major multi-year project that will involve significant change management. More details to come.

V. Approval of Minutes

- The February meeting minutes were approved without changes.

## VI. Treasurer's Report – Trish Watkins

### a. Current Balances

- No further expenses in the maintenance budget.
- Total balance is \$16,334.80 with \$8,006.16 available in the maintenance budget.
- Only expenses in February were EOQ awards and the monthly chair salary.

### b. Budgeting Focus

- Senators are advised to focus on the maintenance budget balance as it represents the funds the Senate has control over.

## VII. Committee Reports

### i. Awards - Allen Porter

#### a. Nomination Results

- The committee received 5 team award nominations.
- A decision on the winners will be made early next week.

### ii. Elections – Ruth Parcels

#### a. Election Turnout

- Elections opened Monday and about 10% of the 3300 eligible voters have voted so far.
- The elections page went down briefly but is back up. Contact [sselect@uark.edu](mailto:sselect@uark.edu) with any issues.

### b. Committee Thanks

- Huge thank you to Dani McCool and the rest of the Elections Committee for all their hard work on the elections.

### iii. Internal Affairs - Kim Gillow

#### a. Parental Leave Policy Review

- Completed a review of parental leave policies at 27 different organizations, including SEC schools, Arkansas schools, and state agencies.
- Compiled data on spousal leave sharing, leave amounts, and usage restrictions. The UA policy is in the middle in terms of leave amount.
- Full data will be shared with senators.

### b. Bylaws Review

- No bylaws update. Work is planned for summer. Instead, committee chairs will be asked to review their relevant bylaws sections to identify any gaps or issues.
- Email Kim with any bylaws questions or concerns to be added to the review list for next year's committee.

### iv. Legislative – Karmen Boddie

#### a. Federal Issues

- Monitoring higher education impacts of recent executive orders, including potential Department of Education staff layoffs and restructuring of financial aid grants and programs.
- Watching for effects of proposed NIH cap on indirect cost funding.

#### b. State Issues

- Advancement and legal counsel have revised certain gift agreements and scholarship language due to recently passed state legislation.
- Senators expressed concerns about growing tension between UA System consolidation efforts and UA-Fayetteville's status as Employer of Choice.
- The Arkansas LEARNS (Education Reform) Act is not expected to significantly impact staff based on the Chancellor's assessment, though some provisions related to faculty tenure protections are concerning.

#### v. Special Events - Becca Clifton

##### a. Staff Picnic

- The Staff Senate picnic is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 14th from 11-1 at 1021 Dining Hall, pending final approval.
- Budget has not yet been approved but the quoted pricing is comparable to previous years. More details to come.

#### VIII. Old Business

##### i. Catastrophic Leave

##### a. Questions for UA System

- Senators are encouraged to send any questions or concerns about the catastrophic leave program to be raised with the UA System Director of Benefits when she visits campus.

##### b. Tabling of Resolution

- A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to table the draft resolution advocating for reinstatement of the catastrophic leave program until after the Director of Benefits meeting in April.
- Topic will be revisited based on the outcome of those discussions.

#### IX. New Business

##### i. Meet the Senators Event

##### a. Event Details

- A "Meet the Senators" event is scheduled for Wednesday, March 19th from 11am-1pm in Arkansas Union 507 to allow staff to get to know their senators.
- It will be advertised as a brown bag lunch event with giveaways and information on Senate projects. Senators are asked to drop by when available.
- Anonymous comment/question boxes or QR code surveys will be available in addition to in-person discussions.

##### b. Purpose

- The event aims to build community, hear staff concerns, and provide a forum for often unheard voices. All staff should feel welcome.

#### X. Chair's Report - Autumn Parker

##### a. Chair Update

- Acting Chair Autumn Parker did not have any additional updates in Roy Cordell's absence.

## XI. Around the Senate

### a. Women's Giving Circle

- Applications are open for Women's Giving Circle grants to fund campus projects related to the health of women and children. Funds are allocated by the Women's Giving Circle donors.

### b. One Day One U of A

- The university's annual giving day is April 10th. Unlike previous years focused on a single large goal, this year features 22 unit-based projects seeking \$5k-\$50k each.
- Example projects include support for campus service dogs, mental health resources for faculty/staff, student robotics teams, and community entrepreneurship programs.
- If projects are overfunded or end early, a process exists to reallocate extra funds to next year's pool. The giving site opens April 10th.

### c. Ceremonies and Events

- A memorial for recently deceased staff member Audra Johnson is being held March 13th in Holcombe Hall.
- On March 21st, UAPD will host a vehicle safety check event for the campus community before Spring Break in Lot 232.

## XII. Adjourn

- The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 PM.

Attendance: Karmen Boddie, Jen Boyer, Chris Butler, Vince Capps, Becca Clifton, Roy Cordell, Michella Cupello, AnReckez Daniels, Alisha Gilbride, Kim Gillow, Lance Grigsby, Hershel Hartford, John Jackson, Alli Johnson, Dani McCool, Katherine Miller, Autumn Parker, Ruth Parcels, Ben Pollock, Allen Porter, Ashley Reeves, Kaitlyn Riggan, Jason Riley, Stephen Ritterbush, Myrlinda Soedjede, Trish Watkins, and Carrie Whitmer

Absent: Erin Butler, Kara Karstedt, Shannon Siebler, and Mary Skinner