

Staff Senate Minutes

August 3, 2005

Escondido Theater, Student Union Basement

www.depts.ttu.edu/staffsenate

- Welcome
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Roll Call

Senators present: Louisa Arriaga, Jana Atkins, Gene Bals, Barbara Bowley, Eric Burrell, Sheryl Epperson, Travis Findley, Rocky Gauna, Sandy Gellner, Brent Guinn, Donna Hurtado, Marcia Kaweck, Marlene Kenady, Carolyn Kennedy, Michelle Kiser, Rick Loper, Guadalupe Luna, Bill McDonald, Teresa Neal, Kathy Nordstrom, Rebecca Owens, Patti Perkins, Donna Perry, Don Roulain, Ryan Scheckel, Laurie Smerud, Randy Smith, Carol Ann Stanley, Linda Stracener, Kevin Tunnell, Richard Verrone, Barbara White, Leigh Wilson

Senators absent: Julia Allen, Estella Barron, Jaclyn Byrd, Yolanda Coronado, Gerald Cunningham, Bobby Davila, Maria Fernandez, Rick Fullerton, Scott Hall, Lori Dudley, Martha Hise, Amy Martindale, Barbara McArthur, Eddie Ramirez, David Shuping

- **Nathanael Haddox, Staff Ombudsman**
 - The Staff Senate was behind creating the Ombudsman position. Nathanael has a J.D. from TTU (1999). He began his work July 1. Mediation is a state requirement for this job. Advanced training, family, victim/offender, and transformative mediation. He is originally from Arizona and did his undergraduate work at the University of South Carolina. He worked in Quality Assurance for the Department of Human Services before coming to TTU.
 - Nathanael has been getting questions about what he can and cannot do. Before any announcements were made, several people have stopped by his office to meet him and bring up issues. Some of the misinformation people have is that he can help with legal issues or grievances. He has brought a presentation that he will be using to introduce himself and his office around campus. He plans to come to the Staff Senate meetings and use it as a resource of discovery.
 - History of Ombudsman – An Ombudsman is not an attorney or a counselor. The first Ombudsman was created in Sweden when the King was abducted and someone had to be appointed to take care of decisions. Today, the Ombudsman stand outside the ordinary course of business to make sure business is being conducted in a fair and impartial manner and that procedure being followed. Ombudsman is a gender neutral word and is both singular and plural. It's a Swedish word that means agent, deputy, proxy, or delegate. Ombudsman have been around universities for nearly 30 years. Over 200 colleges have instituted Ombudsman positions. The first were at Eastern Montana College (1966) and Michigan State (1967).
 - UCOA (University and College Ombuds Association) is the official organization for Ombudsman but is merging with another institution. They developed the standards of practice and ethical principals. The Office of the Ombudsman offers complete confidentiality. According to Haddox: "The University's general policy on confidentiality for the Ombudsman is the University does not call the

ombudsman in the University's behalf in proceedings inside or outside of the University, and they will constantly seek to protect its ombudsman from subpoena by others.”

The UCOA standards cover:

- Access to services
 - informality
 - independence
 - neutrality
 - confidentiality
 - professional competence
- Informality - Anything going through the Ombudsman is outside the legal process. The EEO office handles formal processes. Many staff members will use the Ombudsman to decide whether to file a formal complaint, but there is no legal recourse through this office. It is up to the staff member to take the step of initiating the formal complaint process.
 - Independence - In order to handle a situation objectively, the Ombudsman needs to be independent of his boss so he can point out problems such as a procedure that is not being followed.
 - Confidentiality – The Ombudsman keeps information completely confidential, with exceptions. He is required to report any threats of harm to yourself or others, or if he witnesses you committing a crime. If you confess to a crime, such as a theft, he won't report it, but he will give you the proper advice and point you're your options.
 - Neutrality – (as defined by UCOA) – The Ombudsman has no stake in the outcome, no bias. He will listen to everyone involved and give everyone the opportunity to be heard. In the end, if policies are not followed, he will have an opinion that policies need to be followed. Neutrality is held going into a situation. He will advocate for fairness and equity because neutrality on those issues maintains the status quo. However, most people are under the assumption the Ombudsman is there to represent them. He will help, he will give advice, he will use tools to help staff members and supervisors work out problems. His job is to advocate for fairness. The Ombudsman's job is not only to help staff members deal with supervisors, but also to help supervisors deal with subordinates.
 - Texas Tech is committed to employees. If conflicts are resolved at an early stage without the formalities of paperwork, the animosity and conflict is kept at a lower level. People can be empowered to solve problems for themselves which has the potential to improve employee retention. TTU spends a lot of money training employees, so they want to retain them. In order to help employees resolve problems, Ombudsman use different tools: listening, asking questions, providing information and options, assisting with decision making, and coaching.
 - Agent of Change – If Nathanael recognizes a pattern of problems, such as 12 people saying their supervisor is unfair, he can investigate and work to bring about change in those areas. However, employees can visit him without fear of retaliation.
 - Questions

- *If in your investigation you find there are violations of policy or procedure, do you have any authority to affect the change, or can you only suggest change?* My suggestion will probably bring about change. I do not have the power to demand a supervisor act in a certain way. I will attempt to solve a problem at the lowest level. If that supervisor refuses, I then go to that person's supervisor, explain the problem, and offer my assistance. If they refuse to deal with it, it goes to the next level up, etc.
- *How do you see your office working with other offices designed to handle these issues, such as Quality Service and Professional Development?* I will be a resource to get people to them. If job training with Quality Services is necessary, I will send them there. If someone has emotional problems with their job, I will suggest using the EAP (Employee Assistance Program).
- *How will you advertise your services?* I am asking different departments to allow me to come and introduce myself.
- *People are worried that ombudsman will be an advocate for the university and are worried the status quo will be maintained. How do I convince these employees this isn't the case?* These employees will need to see me in action in order to build trust over time. They may not always like what I say, but they'll know when they see me start taking on supervisors. Word of mouth will also help build this trust. I won't be able to change a long-standing culture overnight, but I am willing to work with people for change. Some types of problems are more underground than they used to be (such as discrimination), but they do exist.
- *How do you maintain employees' confidentiality among your office staff and your reception area?* Everyone in the Ombudsman offices are covered by confidentiality. The offices, both student and staff Ombudsman, are in the Student Union, so everyone has a good reason to be there. The offices will be as discreet as possible. If you don't want someone to see you walk in, call and make an appointment. I will meet you somewhere else. He'll let you know when you call if there's going to be a reporter or someone else in his office. He tries to schedule gaps between appointments or move someone out of the "waiting area" while people are entering or exiting.
- *What kind of notes do you take?* I keep sketchy notes that I will shred. The office does not keep records because records have the potential for being subpoenaed. The campus legal department will attempt to quash any subpoena. There will also be no record of your visit on a schedule. There will be little to offer for successful subpoenas.
- *What about students who are employees?* If the person is complaining about school issues, that's Kathryn Quilliam (the student Ombudsman). If the person is complaining about employment issues, Nathanael will handle it.
- *Who controls your money, and therefore what you do?* The big complaint for rights officers has been that you won't bite the hand that feeds you. Ombudsman has more protections than this. Dr. Whitmore said they had an Ombudsman at Iowa and he is behind it 100%. If my budget starts getting cut, or if they take action against me, it's then my duty to advocate for myself out of fairness. I will address you and tell you what I think is going on.

- *Will there be some reporting back to administration?* I will report general statistics, etc. OP 70.23 says an annual report will be given regarding the number of people using the office and any trends that emerge. The student report contains gender, ethnic makeup, department, and issue trends. I kept ethnicity, gender as part of my report, but otherwise, the reporting will be very different. I'll report things like interpersonal issues (communication), performance, but will not have a breakdown of who is management or employee, nor by department. A generic report will give people more confidence in using this office. My first report will cover 2 months, July and August. I don't think there will be any trends, although there already have been some recurring themes. The OP requires the annual report also come to the Staff Senate. Since I will be coming to most Staff Senate meetings, I'll bring the report with me.
- **Bylaws and Constitution – Carolyn Kennedy**
 The Executive Board requested this change be presented by Carolyn Kennedy, a member of last year's Bylaws Committee. By having the first reading at this meeting, it won't take as long to implement the change. A second reading will be necessary before a vote can be taken. The Staff Senate has had an issues form for several years, but it wasn't until last year that a committee was formed to really study the issues and work for resolution. It is the Executive Board's recommendation to elevate the Issues Committee to a standing committee.
- **EEO Representative selection** – EEO Representatives will be selected to represent each EEO classification on the Executive Committee. They will attend the Executive Board meetings and will be voting members in order to add input from each EEO classification. These meetings are held the last Wednesday every month and usually last 2 hours. Anyone can attend, but you're encouraged to let Richard Verrone know in advance if you plan to attend.
 - EEO Reps
 - Administrative/Management: Eric Burrell
 - Clerical: Kathy Nordstrom
 - Crafts and Trades: Travis Findley
 - Professional: Ryan Scheckel
 - Service: Don Roulain
 - Technical/Paraprofessional: Donna Hurtado
- **Committee Assignments** – Senators will sign up to serve on the committees they prefer. After the initial sign ups, the Nominations committee will handle any future committee assignments. Committee chairs will be chosen at each committee's initial meeting.
 - Nominations is busy now getting people placed on committees. They won't meet again except to take care of replacements. Last year, this was done by e-mail rather than through face to face meetings.
 - Grievance is the most inactive committee. This committee handles problems within the Senate.

- Issues – the more people that sign up, the less work there will be to do by individuals on this committee. This committee reports to the Executive Board. The chair presents a report at the general meeting. This is probably the most important committee as this is the purpose of the Staff Senate.
- Bylaws and Constitution is how the Staff Senate is governed and how it functions. Last year, this committee was very active and presented changes at most meetings.
- Elections meets seasonally, whenever new senators are needed. There is not much of a commitment for most of the year. The busy time of the year for this committee is April-May, but a special election may be necessary.
- Communications and Public Relations is a very active committee. Members attend the campus Welcome Events to distribute information to new employees. This committee has been charged with putting together an annual report so every staff member on campus understands the work we accomplished the previous year. Another objective is to let people know we actually accomplish things and don't just meet to sit in a meeting for two hours a month. This committee's main responsibility is to look for additional ways to advertise who and what the Staff Senate is.
- COPS solicits businesses to provide discounts to staff. It has been recommended that this committee become a subcommittee of the Communication/PR Committee.
- Scholarship committee is an ad hoc committee, but may also need to be a permanent committee. The Staff Senate provides book scholarships for staff members. This committee handles the applications for scholarships and makes the award decisions. This committee is active two times a year, fall and spring.
- Web page committee is a small, but ongoing committee charged with keeping the website up to date.
- Budget is an ad hoc committee, but will probably be made into a standing committee. The Treasurer is the chair of this committee.
- External committees – the University has several committees where Staff Senate members attend meetings and report back to the Staff Senate.
 - The **Strategic Planning** representative is appointed by President Whitmore from list of nominations from Staff Senate.
 - **Academic Council** handles various academic issues. Rebecca Owens will continue to attend Academic Council meetings and report back.
 - **Sexual Harassment**
 - **Benefits & Retirement**
 - **Social Security Number Usage**
 - **Information Technology** - There is a big effort on campus to tighten computer security. Sam Segran will come to next month's meeting to speak about this.
 - **University Discipline** (students) – the University Discipline committee did not meet last year except for orientation.
 - **University Discipline Appeals** (students)
 - **Student Affairs**

- Staff Senate Amigos – there are Senators who do not speak English well or could benefit from an interpreter who will sit beside these individuals and make sure these people understand what's going on in the meetings. E-mail (or otherwise contact) Richard (and copy Jana) if you can volunteer for this.
- **Attendance** – Our attendance has been suffering. The officers and previous Executive Boards have tossed around ideas about how to get people to attend the meetings and we will continue to do so. Everyone needs to be here so the Senate can function. We will continue working to figure out how to get people to attend. If your department or supervisor will not let you attend, please let Richard know. We want to work with your department and your supervisor to allow you to attend. Officers plan to send letters to everyone's supervisors. The meeting dates and times will be included in these letters.
- **President's report** – One of the president's responsibilities is to appoint people to certain positions. Jaclyn Byrd has been appointed Parliamentarian for 2005-2006. She will be back to work August 31.
- **Scholarship Funds** – The Executive Committee recommends that we roll over \$5000 from last year's budget to the scholarship fund for fall staff scholarships. There is usually a budget of \$1200 each semester. At the moment, we have additional money we can rollover for scholarships. A budget revision will be prepared as soon as the roll over is approved.
 - Motion made by Carolyn Kennedy to roll \$5000 from last year's budget to this year's scholarship fund
 - Seconded by Carol Ann Stanley.
 - No discussion
 - Motion carries
- **Budget advisory committee.** Richard can provide budget information to anyone who wants it. The state's budget is rising, but funding for higher education is not.
- **Announcements**
 - Julia Allen had her baby.
 - Everyone will be contacted regarding committee assignments.
 - The next Executive Board meeting is at the end of the month. It is preferred that committee chairs attend this meeting.
- **Adjourn**
 - Motion made by Donna Perry to adjourn
 - Seconded by Rick Loper
 - Motion carries

Appendix A

Bylaws Revisions

First Reading

Article VI. Standing Committees

A. Membership/Purpose

ORIGINAL

6. Other Committees

The Executive Board, as deemed necessary, shall determine committee appointments and duties. Any ad hoc committee shall be disbanded when its purpose has been served.

REVISED (changes are in **bold**)

6. **Issues**

The Issues Committee shall be comprised of a minimum of five members of the Senate. The duties of the committee shall be to study issues that are referred to them by the Executive Committee, make recommendations back to the Executive Committee regarding the handling and disposition of each issue, and notify the author of the issue of any action resulting from the committee's study.

7. Other Committees