

Regular Monthly Staff Senate Meeting
February 9th, 2022

Meeting called to order at 10:02

Senators present: Kelci Martinez, Chanda Hooten, Ashlee Dixon, Kelly Stewart, Carrie Stanley, Brian Bagwell, Tanisha Owens (Alternate for Millie Bowden), Lenette Jones, Phil Grace, Lisa Buck, Angie Bradshaw, Bobbie Lee, Stacey Howard, Alex Arce, Chris Golston, LTC Tommie Campbell, Erin Poe (Alternate)

Senators not present: Brenda Callaway, Salina Ables, Millie Bowden (sent alternate Tanish Owens), Chris Spurling, Brittany Curtis, Chris Adams, David Martinez, Alan Hall

Guest: Susie Kirk, Tina Hall, Tricia Wempe, Beverly Quillin, Carrie Burt, Cynthia Dillavou, Denise Cordova, Jordan Argo, Kimberly Stecker, Leah Sexton, Lisa Carpenter, Ron Heinz, Sally Crain (Faculty Senate Representative), Victoria Mirocke, Willica Morgan

-Minutes approved from January Meeting

-Guest Speaker Tina Hall

Tina Hall discussed the heart fund and other avenues the foundation is doing to help staff (and faculty) at this time.

The Heart Fund was established two years ago in the first round of furloughs. Alumni and friends at that time provided funding to faculty and staff who were denied benefits who were denied benefits. The foundation has been sharing information with alumni and friends on how they can donate to the Heart fund. Currently there is approximately \$35000-\$36,000 in the fund. This fund is set up for faculty or staff who are denied benefits through DWF, the foundation will work to provide the same benefits that the employee didn't get from the Work Share program. Because this furlough is expected to be longer they do have the challenge to stay within the funds available. Last time approximately 10 people didn't not receive their benefits. People who exhausted all of their denials with DWF were then awarded the benefits through the Heart Fund. Tina noted that the maximum benefits from DWS for employees is \$90 per day (it is based on a percentage of your current pay).

Ms. Hall addressed that the Issue last time was there were a LOT of people across the state requesting assistance and participating in the program due to the extra COVID funding and DWF was overwhelmed. Currently the COVID relief is not in play so she don't feel that the system is currently as overwhelmed as it was the first time. The other challenge last time was because the furlough was implemented over the summer and we were classified in education K-12. Janet, in HR, is currently working with DWF to try to see what can be done with the furloughs as they extend into the summer months so we are not lumped into that group again. Janet is working directly with DWF trying to

ensure that benefit is extended through the summer. Ms. Hall is hopeful that a lot of the issues that occurred last time are better this time around. She stated two reasons... the timing of the furloughs happening and the fact that the system isn't as overwhelmed at this time on the state end. The foundation will provide very clear instructions when the time comes of how employees who are denied benefits get connected with the heart fund. But she briefly explained that If a staff member does get a denial letter from DWF. The employee needs to take that letter to HR. HR will then help with the appeal to DWF and if it ultimately is denied then HR will pass that name along to the foundation for the heart fund consideration.

Ms. Hall reiterated that the furlough is currently planned to take place between February 28th-June 30th but she stated it could extend longer. Janet Brewer from HR is the planned guest speaker for our March 9th staff senate meeting.

A question was posed to Ms. Hall from a senator: How will staff members find out that their position is eliminated? Dr. Ambrose stated in an article in the Arkansas Democrat that approximately 12 staff positions will be eliminated. That is an estimated number. Reduction of staff positions have to follow state guidelines and are also governed by the division of higher education. The recommendation is that staff will receive a 30 day notice. Any meetings that occur would be between the supervisor and employee. Accrued vacation would be paid out as well as other assistance that comes along with an employee being severed from their position.

A question was posed from a senator: Can employees withdraw from retirement? That will be a question that Janet Brewer can provide details on that option. Another staff member said they called TIA Cref directly and they were told that they were not able to take out money from their retirement account until the employee was 55 years of age. Tina says that is something that Janet is for certain discussing this with TIAA Cref. If a staff member has APERS they are a little more stringent.

Senator asked "That We need to ensure that all campus personnel names aren't submitted by HR to DWS this time but only those that are eligible. As a grant employees, we aren't eligible for the shared work program but because my name was submitted, I received all the forms and even got an IRS inquiry that have to be resolved. Also, my identity was stolen due to the scammers phishing the DWS system. I had to file a police report and send it to everyone including the AG in Arkansas." Tina did acknowledge this comment and will pass it along as well.

Senator said they wanted to make sure other staff members were aware of a question that they'd asked about the shared work program and that in order to qualify the staff member MUST work all 32 non furloughed hours for that week to qualify for benefits. For example, If vacation time (example... spring break week vacation to ski in Colorado) is taken during the furlough shared work program, my understanding is that you would not qualify for the weekly unemployment benefit. Tina said that is correct but in the spring break example they are exploring with DWF that we are owed a holiday during spring break and then the 8 hours of furlough time so she's trying to figure out if we would still be able to get the shared work program benefits for that specific week.

They are working to get a document together of exactly what employees do to get enrolled in DWF as well as questions specific to this program including when and how to register for the shared work program. We should get that within the next week or so. It will come through our email to "currently employed" listserve.

Ms. Hall noted that as a result of a faculty senate meeting Sunday. Those questions/ answers will be posted today via the website www.hsu.edu/futureofhenderson. You can also listen into the faculty senate meeting this afternoon if wanted.

Tina is currently compiling all questions that faculty and staff are asking www.hsu.edu/futureofhenderson. Those questions and answers will be compiled there.

A senator asked about retirement. Ms. Hall said that employees eligible would be getting a form around the 1st of March. If a person is intending to retire they need to submit the notification forms by March 31st that they intend to retire.

Chancellor's report.

Kelcie Met with him a year ago. Among several other things they are discussing bringing back the staff awards of excellence. They are working out the details on that.

New Business

Senators submitted their request for placement on staff senate committees. The executive team tried to give everyone their top choice requests. Those assignments are as follows:

Elections Committee: Carrie Stanley (Chair), Lenette Jones, Chris Adams, Stacey Howard, and Alex Arce.

Staff Handbook Committee: Bobbie Lee (Chair), Ashlee Dixon, Phil Grace, Stacey Howard, and Christopher Golston.

Emergency Fund Committee: Alex Arce (Chair), Brenda Callaway, Angie Bradshaw, and Chanda Hooten.

Textbook Scholarship Committee: Brain Bagwell (Chair), Kelly Stewart, Madalyn Coffman, and Stacey Howard.

Survey/Shared Governance Committee: Salina Ables (Chair), David Martinez, and Carrie Stanley.

Faculty Representative: Tommie Campbell.

Other Business:

Senator stated that they had asked Dr. Patterson a question about leave and wanted to make sure other senators were aware of the answer.... The question was will our leave (vacation and sick time) be affected by the furlough? The answer was we will not be

earning sick and vacation leave at the same rate. That will be cut at the same rate as the furlough (20%). Kelci said she would follow up on this question to get more details as to why this is being impacted.

Senator stated they had asked Dr. Patterson about open enrollment for insurance if we can change insurance because of changes in salaries. Dr. Patterson consulted with ASU HR and was told the answer is it is NOT a qualifying event so we will not be able to go in and change any insurance enrollment. Several senators expressed frustration and asked for more clarification on this. Kelci said she will follow up on this as well.

Sally Crain, the representative from faculty senate, says "I see you". We (herself and other faculty) want to partner with staff. This should be a time we work together and collaborate rather than causing further division between faculty and staff senate. Please let us know how we can work together. Sally says this comment is not just her feelings but also feelings that other faculty members have expressed to her as well.

Ashlee Dixon wanted to address that Reddies Day is tomorrow. "I personally want to encourage everyone to keep in mind that despite all that is going on we need to put our best foot forward. We don't want to rob these incoming students of what a reddies is. A reddie is resilient. Students deserve to be here, want to be here and want to be successful." Tomorrow is like the superbowl for us. She requests that everyone put their best foot forward tomorrow for these future students. 150 students are signed up to attend and about 280 (with guests) will be on our beautiful campus tomorrow.

No treasure report.

Our next meeting is March 9th 10:00am.

Meeting adjourned at 10:58