

Staff Senate Monthly Meeting

October 10, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.
Main Campus Student Center – Room 249
In-person attendance for Staff Senators and Alternates
Virtual attendance available through [livestream link](#)

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Chair Hildenbrand called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. She shared meeting best practices with staff, guests, and those who attended virtually and welcomed the new senators who will serve during the 2024-2025 year. Speaking is limited to senators, alternates, ex-officio members, and individuals who have been granted speaking privileges before the meeting. Senators should state their name and their division before speaking. Non-senators who wish to speak at future meetings can notify Staff Senate by emailing staffsenate@ecu.edu.

Roll Call

Jenna Boardman, Staff Senate Secretary

A roll call was conducted to determine if a quorum was present.

Senators absent: Lauren Arp (Brody School of Medicine), Kristy Ashley (Athletics), Jennifer Cook (Brody School of Medicine), Jennifer Cranford (Academic Affairs), Lyndsay Edgerton (Academic Affairs), Devin Fagnano (Brody School of Medicine), Gary Martin (Administration & Finance),

Alternates present: Anthony Bechtel (Student Affairs), Michelle Bone (Academic Affairs), Dominique Coleman (Academic Affairs), Stephanie Fields (University Advancement), Patricia Earnhardt Tyndall (Chancellor's Office), Latoya Langford (Administration & Finance), Michelle Smith (Administration & Finance), Ronnie Woodward (Chancellor's Office)

Approval of Minutes

Jenna Boardman, Staff Senate Secretary

The September 12, 2024, meeting minutes were emailed to Staff Senate members; two corrections were received, and the minutes were approved as presented.

Campus Update

Stephanie Coleman, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance

Vice Chancellor Stephanie Coleman welcomed the group and shared the administrative report on

behalf of the Chancellor's Cabinet. The Chancellor's message expressed care and support for Western North Carolina communities affected by Hurricane Helene, highlighting the personal impact on ECU community members, including distance education students, faculty, and two ECU dental service learning centers in Sylva and Spruce Pine. ECU's response to the hurricane included mobilizing various resources: placing food trucks at UNC Asheville, providing mental health services, deploying ECU police officers, and organizing donation drives. Special thanks to the Staff Senate for coordinating a blood drive with the American Red Cross, demonstrating ECU's dedication to supporting neighboring communities during critical times.

Campus updates included a strong emphasis on advancing ECU's student success agenda. Following University Day, the Chancellor outlined key initiatives such as setting data-driven retention goals, enhancing professional advising for undergraduates, reforming policies to make ECU more transfer-friendly, aligning fundraising and scholarship practices, and implementing credit benchmarks to support timely degree completion. It was reiterated that every member of the ECU community plays a role in creating a relationship-rich environment that supports student success.

Vice Chancellor Coleman also provided an update on the Fiscal Health Initiative, which was launched in September to improve ECU's financial sustainability. A survey gathered feedback from 218 respondents, and two workgroups (Operational and Academic Fiscal Health) are reviewing past recommendations and survey insights to prioritize actionable items. The workgroups plan to present recommendations in December, after which the oversight committee, comprised of senior leaders, will decide on items for implementation. A dedicated website hosts updates on the initiative, including campus forum recordings, accessible with ECU credentials.

The campus update further emphasized the importance of enrollment growth and new revenue streams to avoid broad budget reductions, noting that future revenue and budget allocations will prioritize areas like employee retention, student success, and research infrastructure.

Faculty Senate Update

Dr. Anne Ticknor, Faculty Senate Chair and Professor in the College of Education

Dr. Anne Ticknor provided an update on behalf of the faculty. She noted that the Faculty Senate currently oversees 24 committees and is reviewing ex-officio committee membership to ensure the right representatives are present. This review aims to reflect various university units, including colleges, libraries, and relevant administrative offices, in line with committee focus areas, such as student-focused or faculty employment-related committees. Dr. Ticknor welcomed suggestions from Staff Senate members regarding committee representation and wanted to ensure appropriate perspectives are included in committee discussions.

Dr. Ticknor also mentioned that she had proposed merging six of the committees into three pairs, citing overlap in responsibilities that could be more efficiently managed if combined. For instance, the Faculty Welfare and University Budget committees examine faculty salaries, and the Teaching Grant and Academic Awards committees focus on faculty recognition. Additionally, the Calendar and

Admissions and Retention Policy committees share complementary functions; for example, admissions policies often influence the academic calendar. She clarified that these mergers are considerations and not final decisions.

Another committee update included a request for one committee to reconsider its name and charge and the potential elimination of another committee, established in the 1960s, which may now be outdated. Dr. Ticknor emphasized that the suggested elimination is due to changes over time rather than the committee's usefulness.

Dr. Ticknor further highlighted an upcoming review of the general education program, which currently has 40 credits. Since all undergraduate degrees were standardized to 120 credit hours several years ago, there may be an opportunity to streamline requirements, providing more flexibility in academic programs. She acknowledged that such changes might be challenging, as they would affect students and advisors.

The update concluded with a question and answer session, during which Dr. Ticknor elaborated on the committees under review. For example, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee may revise its name and charge considering recent policy updates from the university system, which impact the committee's responsibilities. The Faculty Senate's Committee on Committees oversees all Senate committees and will review and manage any changes to committee structures or charges, ensuring proper representation across university units. Dr. Ticknor closed by encouraging ongoing collaboration between faculty and staff and welcomed any ideas or questions.

Student Government Association Update

Emily Bronson, SGA Attorney General

Attorney General of the Student Government Association (SGA), Miss Emily Bronson, provided an update on SGA activities. She shared that the SGA is energized after fall break and has started moving forward with several initiatives. The SGA recently appointed a chair and vice chair for the Elections Commission in preparation for the February student government elections and is enthusiastic about the new leadership. In response to Hurricane Helene, the SGA is collecting items to support communities in western North Carolina. Additionally, the SGA's Community Outreach Committee and State and Local Government Committee have merged efforts temporarily to focus on university-wide initiatives promoting student voting as the November elections approach.

Emily also mentioned that during their weekly assembly meeting, SGA members passed legislation to clarify and streamline their bylaws, an effort the Executive Council worked on over the summer. The updates, spanning 32 pages, aim to make the governing process more accessible and understandable for students. Emily concluded by inviting any questions from the group and expressing gratitude for the opportunity to share the updates.

Pirates Vote Presentation

Alex Dennis, Senior Assistant Director
Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement

Alex Dennis from the Center for Leadership and Engagement presented an overview of activities surrounding the upcoming election. He began by emphasizing the importance of nonpartisan engagement, encouraging students, faculty, and staff to get involved. Dennis shared various programs offered through the center to promote civic engagement, including “Dinner and Discourse,” a civility program allowing students to discuss current events over a meal, and the annual Constitution Day celebration. He also highlighted the upcoming “Citizen U” program, featuring the mayor discussing local government, and the Election Day cookout at the Ledonia Wright Cultural Center patio, where attendees can bring their dogs.

Dennis reminded attendees that students can register to vote at their home addresses or using their campus or local addresses. A one-stop early voting location will be available at the student center, where students can register and vote simultaneously. He noted that voter ID is required for this election, specifying that the physical ECU OneCard is acceptable identification for students, faculty, and staff. Dennis also clarified that staff should vote off the clock and that any form of incentive, such as extra credit, for voting or registering is prohibited by law. Student organizations can invite political candidates to campus, and Dennis encouraged staff to remind students of policies regarding legal voting and voter registration practices.

The center has been busy with voter registration drives, and tomorrow is the deadline for paper voter registration in North Carolina. Mass emails will be sent to the campus community, and SGA will share additional voting information with students. Dennis shared that Pitt County’s early voting location at the student center will provide parking for voters, making it more accessible. He advised that external groups offering campus voter registration should coordinate with his office. He emphasized that the center handles university-associated registration efforts officially to ensure reliability.

In response to questions, Dennis explained the same-day registration process for early voting and clarified that students living on campus need only provide their OneCard to verify residency. He addressed concerns about external organizations with clipboards, advising students to use official campus resources for voter registration to ensure their forms are correctly processed. Additionally, Dennis noted that election-related events held in the building must comply with Board of Elections policies, and no election programming is permitted once early voting begins.

Dennis concluded by encouraging everyone to motivate students to participate in the election, reminding them that voting engagement is a positive way to stay informed and involved. He highlighted the “Dogs for Democracy” event on Election Day, inviting students and staff to enjoy hot dogs and celebrate democracy together. He also welcomed any further questions about election resources and civic engagement initiatives managed by his office.

Financial Wellness Presentation

Kevin Sutton, Director

Financial Wellness Center for Student Success

Kevin Sutton, Director of the Financial Wellness Center, presented an overview of financial resources and educational initiatives available to university employees. His main office is located on the third floor of the main campus student center, with an additional Financial Wellness Hub across from Steak and Shake on the ground level. Sutton explained that his goal was to raise awareness about financial resources for employees and to provide a quick educational session. He invited attendees to define “financial wellness” and highlighted that financial wellness encompasses knowledge, skills, and the ability to manage financial resources over a lifetime. Sutton noted that this foundation helps employees effectively budget, manage debt, and plan for immediate and long-term financial goals.

Sutton shared that the Financial Wellness Center offers guidance on various topics, including budgeting, credit scores, debt management, federal student loan repayment, investment basics, and retirement. Employees and students can access personalized financial coaching, individually or as couples, focusing on managing finances as a shared responsibility. His credentials, which include certifications in personal financial management and social work, enable him to assist in areas like budgeting and student loan management but not in specific tax or insurance advice. Sutton also mentioned internship opportunities at the Financial Wellness Center, emphasizing that interns receive rigorous training to provide financial guidance at a high level.

Sutton outlined key financial trends among employees, such as challenges in discussing finances with partners and managing everyday costs, including food expenses. He also identified six financial archetypes—Status, Carefree, Giving, Security, Planning, and Spontaneous—based on an assessment offered by the Financial Wellness Center. Each archetype, he explained, reflects different approaches to spending and saving, influencing personal financial behaviors and strategies. Sutton recommended weekly financial check-ins as a way to keep finances top of mind, maintain control over spending, and ease discussions about money in relationships.

In discussing credit scores, Sutton clarified that the FICO score, which ranges from 300 to 850, is widely used by lenders and consists of five key factors, with payment history and amounts owed being the most impactful. He explained that maintaining a high credit score is not synonymous with financial responsibility, as the system is designed to encourage debt through minimum payments. To keep credit scores healthy, Sutton suggested paying off credit card balances weekly to reflect actual available funds and avoid carrying a balance.

Sutton closed by encouraging employees to use available resources, including personalized coaching sessions and tailored presentations for staff development or student organizations. He invited attendees to reach out if they wished to arrange a financial workshop or coaching session to promote a financially informed and resilient campus community.

State Employee's Combined Campaign

Kimrey Miko, Staff Senator

Kimrey Miko provided an update on the State Employees Combined Campaign (SECC), which is now in its 40th year. Established in 1984 under Governor James Hunt, SECC remains the only campaign authorized to solicit donations from state employees via paycheck deductions. Since its inception, North Carolina employees have donated over \$125 million to charities, a testament to the campaign's impact. The campaign supports 750 charities listed in the SECC giving guide, accessible both in print and online at the SECC website.

Miko highlighted the importance of contributing to those in need and detailed several donation options, demonstrating how specific amounts can make a tangible difference. For instance, a \$10 donation can provide three meals for a senior or four vaccinations for kittens. A \$25 donation can cover hygiene products for four months or supply essential items to a family post-disaster. The SECC offers flexible giving methods, including credit card, check, and payroll deduction. Miko emphasized the convenience and benefits of payroll deduction, which allows employees to make manageable contributions over the course of the year, pre-tax.

This year, SECC donations come with the opportunity to win prizes sponsored by external funds, ensuring all contributions go directly to charities. Prizes include Amazon and Grubhub gift cards, two nine-month campus recreation memberships, upgraded parking passes, and ECU versus Temple homecoming game tickets. Miko noted that last year, ECU employees contributed \$75,000 to SECC, with top-supported charities including the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, the Humane Society of Eastern Carolina, Fellowship Hall in Greensboro, Special Olympics of North Carolina, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

In light of recent events like Hurricane Helene, SECC's website features a specialized search for charities aiding Western North Carolina. Miko encouraged contributions via payroll deduction to support these recovery efforts over time.

To celebrate SECC's 40th anniversary, Miko incorporated trivia about the year 1984, asking participants questions about events and pop culture from that year, such as the population of North Carolina, the price of gas, the Olympic Games location, and iconic movies and technology from that time. Miko encouraged departments to invite her to speak about SECC and distribute giving guides. She reminded attendees that weekly campaign emails would continue through the end of November.

Treasurer's Report

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Chair Hildenbrand reviewed the Treasurer's Report, which included minimal activity during this period. Recent expenditures covered a room rental and the purchase of boxes for the school supply

drive. Additionally, reimbursement for travel expenses from the system office is pending. No questions were raised regarding the report.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee

Chair-Elect Bri Wood provided an update focused on the ongoing hurricane relief donation drives. The ECU donation drive will occur tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. outside the Main Campus Student Center, with shifts available for sign-up on GivePulse. Athletics will also host donation drives, including one at tonight's soccer game at 7 p.m., with a list of needed items on the ECU athletics page and the CLCE website. Additionally, there will be a food drive at the homecoming football game. Other volunteer opportunities and related events can be found on the CLCE website.

By-Laws Committee

No update.

Communication and Marketing Committee

Senator Erin Gray, chair of the Communication and Marketing Committee, provided several updates. October's highlighted committee was shifted to the Rewards and Recognition Committee due to reworking issues within the initially selected committee. The committee aims to complete this feature by the end of October. The Membership Committee is planned as November's highlighted feature, and someone from Communications will reach out for the necessary information.

Additionally, the committee is improving the workflow for sharing approved flyers and posts, acknowledging some confusion in the current process. They are exploring various options, such as centralizing files in a shared folder or determining whether materials should be distributed directly by the committee, by individual chairs, or via the Executive Committee. They welcomed feedback and suggestions to streamline this process.

Finally, the committee received appreciation for their efforts in actively promoting Staff Senate announcements on social media, with regular updates observed on Facebook and Instagram.

Human Resources Committee

Senator Michelle Smith provided several updates. She highlighted an opportunity for community service with the local food bank, available on the committee's Teams page under "General." The service event is scheduled for Thursday, November 21st, from 1 to 3 p.m., with 20 to 25 spots available, though it may include other volunteers beyond the committee members.

Additionally, the committee is working on the Staff Emeritus program, with nomination emails already sent out and posts on Facebook and Instagram, thanks to the Communications and Marketing Committee. Nominations for Staff Emeritus are open until November 30th, after which the committee will proceed with the selection process.

Leadership and Professional Development Committee

Chair Joani Zary provided an update from the Leadership & Professional Development Committee. The committee met on Monday, September 30th, to select their first and second choices for the speaker at Ballard's Lessons in Leadership event (BALL). The committee has emailed the potential speaker's contact, and it is currently awaiting a reply.

Membership Committee

Senator Laura Beth Fanning, Chair of the Membership Committee, provided several updates. The committee met this morning and discussed some suggestions that will be discussed during New Business. The committee is now focusing on its second goal: reviewing and improving the nomination and election process. They began gathering necessary information today and plan to streamline the process for the coming year, with a productive meeting anticipated in November.

The committee has filled all senator seats in Brody, with only a few alternate positions open in Athletics and one in University Advancement. Fanning expressed appreciation for the Brody senators who assisted with filling the seats.

Recognition and Rewards Committee

Senator Dana Lopez, Chair of the Recognition and Rewards Committee, provided updates on upcoming events and plans. The annual Wellness Walk is scheduled for Thursday, October 19th, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Lake Laupus on the Health Sciences Campus. The weather is expected to be favorable, but a rain date is set for Thursday, October 24th if needed. Attendees can enjoy a food truck (Thug Kitchen), live music, and approximately 25 vendors and organizations. Buses will shuttle participants from the main campus student center to the Health Sciences Campus every 30 minutes to make attendance convenient. Committee members will lead small walking groups, though participants are also welcome to join casually. The committee encouraged everyone to take their lunch hour at the Wellness Walk, bring their walking shoes, and enjoy the event.

The 2025 Outstanding Staff Award ceremony is confirmed for May 1st at 3 p.m. in the Black Box Theater at the Main Campus Student Center.

Scholarship Committee

Jenny Gregory, co-chair of the Scholarship Committee, shared some exciting updates, starting with the addition of two new members, Lisa Dozier and Carmela Oden, completing their team. They recently met to discuss ongoing projects, and committee members should have received a survey sent by Michelle Bone. With many great responses already collected, the committee encouraged anyone who hasn't completed it to do so soon.

They plan to reconvene next week to finalize fundraising ideas and begin implementing them. The committee is awaiting an amendment to the fund agreement for the Staff Senate Scholarship. This amendment, requested last year by Vice Chancellor Coleman, will expand eligibility to include children of SHRA, EPS, and CSS categories, ensuring a broader applicant pool. Once the amendment is finalized, they expect to open the scholarship for applications by November 1st. The committee

reminded everyone to complete the survey if they haven't already done so and thanked members for their input.

Well-Being Committee

Senator Bret Wilson from the Well-Being Committee provided an update on recent initiatives. The committee discussed an indigenous land acknowledgment and has reached out to a guest speaker to present it, ideally at the next meeting. They are also excited to announce the annual Women Leaders Panel theme, "Creating Space to Enhance Employee Well-being and Workforce Success." The committee is finalizing the date and location for this event and hopes to confirm these details shortly. Once finalized, they will invite senators to submit nominations for panel participants, aiming for a balanced representation of both staff and faculty.

Old Business

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Senator Joani Zary provided the results from the recent blood drive organized by the Staff Senate, which saw 16 appointments, with 21 donors presenting. Of those, 19 units of blood were successfully collected. While turnout was good, organizers encouraged further participation in upcoming drives. Another blood drive is scheduled for Tuesday, October 15th, at the Brody School of Medicine, in the Two West 40 conference rooms, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The need for blood is especially critical now, and donors are reminded that they are eligible to donate even after receiving a flu or COVID-19 vaccine. Donations can also be made at the center located at 700 Cromwell Drive, off Red Banks Road, where appointments are available for those unable to attend the scheduled drives.

New Business

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

During a discussion, a proposal was made to consider merging three committees within the organization: the Leadership and Professional Development Committee, the Human Resources Committee, and the Well-Being Committee. Initially, the suggestion was to merge Human Resources and Well-Being, given that the new Office of Post has a well-being component. However, it was also suggested that Leadership and Professional Development could merge with the Well-Being Committee.

Each committee chair presented the core responsibilities of their committee to clarify roles, revealing some overlap but also distinct areas of focus. Human Resources, for example, handles community service initiatives such as school supply drives and food bank events, which were not explicitly included in its initial charge. This prompted discussion on potentially updating committee charges to reflect their current activities better. Other suggestions included creating a new committee focused solely on community service.

Additionally, there was an in-depth discussion on committee sizes, with suggestions to increase membership to better manage workloads. There was interest in creating an ad hoc committee to

review and possibly restructure the overall committee system, including examining charges and the distribution of duties.

An alternate discussion focused on executive committee structure and succession planning. The Membership Committee proposed restructuring executive committee roles, establishing term limits, and staggered election schedules to improve knowledge transfer. Given the commitment involved, concerns were raised about the feasibility of two-year terms for roles such as secretary and treasurer. Alternatives like shadowing or transitional periods were suggested to help incoming members.

Due to a lack of quorum, no official decisions or votes were taken. This topic will be revisited at the next meeting for further discussion and potential action.

Announcements

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Chair Hildenbrand shared that the UNC Staff Assembly has extended the Janet B. Royster Memorial Scholarship application deadline. This year's goal was 100 applicants, and they have exceeded this target with 112 submissions, with ECU ranking second in the number of applicants.

Additionally, open enrollment is ongoing through October 25th. Staff members were reminded that they would automatically be enrolled in the 70/30 health insurance plan if they did not make any changes.

Gratitude was expressed to everyone who volunteered or plans to volunteer for the Hurricane Helene relief efforts in western North Carolina and to those who donated blood at the recent blood drive.

In closing, Chair Crystal Hildenbrand announced that the next Staff Senate meeting will be held on Thursday, November 14th, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the East Carolina Heart Institute Auditorium.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Meeting minutes were taken and prepared by Staff Senate Secretary Jenna Boardman.