

Staff Senate Monthly Meeting

November 9, 2023, 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

Dana Lopez, Staff Senate Chair

Chair Lopez called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. She welcomed staff and guests and shared meeting best practices. Speaking is limited to senators, alternates, ex-officio members, and those who have previously been granted speaking privileges. Senators should state their name and their division before speaking. Non-senators who would like to speak at future meetings can notify Staff Senate by emailing staffsenate@ecu.edu.

Campus Update

Dr. Philip G. Rogers, Chancellor

Chancellor Rogers welcomed the group and stated he had just come from the Cupola where 70 flags were flying, representing the international students who attend ECU. The flags were marched across campus in celebration of ECU being awarded the Senator Paul Simon Award. This is the most prestigious award for internationalization in the country and is delivered by an international higher education association.

To add to the wonderful accomplishments across campus, it was announced that the women's basketball team will be celebrating their conference tournament championship by unveiling the banner in the rafters of Minges Coliseum on the evening of November 9, 2023. Chancellor Rogers urged staff to attend this event.

ECU recently celebrated homecoming and welcomed alumni back to campus. Many alumni were honored for their service in support of ECU. Other recent events include ECU hosting the North Carolina State Board of Education meeting, a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new Military Veterans Resource Center located in the Main Campus Student Center, hosting military and veterans on campus to celebrate during the Memorial Walk Brick Pavers Ceremony, and a dinner recognizing inductees of the Distinguished Military Service Society.

Chancellor Rogers stated he has attended a wide array of meetings, where he engages others and spreads the word about great things happening at ECU. One of those recent gatherings was attending the NCAA Division I Board of Directors' meetings.

Chancellor Rogers stated he engages with the Staff Senate Executive Committee each month to receive feedback, questions, and concerns from staff. He has enjoyed hearing about the successful Wellness Walk and the upcoming work with the local food bank, which lifts the community. He is grateful for the leadership that the Staff Senate brings to campus to advance ECU's mission and encouraged everyone to

take care of themselves and others to create a culture of care. When Chancellor Rogers took on his role in 2021, he initiated the Pirate Perspectives Tour, which involved holding 50-60 meetings across campus to connect with different departments, colleges, schools, and divisions. He has now launched a series of faculty, staff, and student lunches held several times a semester as a way to receive feedback in a casual, informal setting. Chancellor Rogers provided one anecdote from the first staff session where an employee from Parking and Transportation shared her passion for ECU and how she takes tough experiences from her job and brings out the mission of ECU in the midst of it.

Chancellor Rogers serves on a task force that is modernizing the Carnegie Classification System, which categorizes institutions based on research. This group released a report last week that eradicates the metrics associated with the basic classification system in American higher education. The changes are intended to drive institutions towards pursuing their mission in more meaningful ways as opposed to investing dollars in single dimensional metrics that may or may not be aligned with that mission. In order to be classified as a Research 1 (R1) university, the institution must spend at least \$50 million on research a year and produce 70 doctoral degrees. Based on the data, ECU is well-positioned to potentially move from an R2 to an R1 university. He will share updates with the campus community when they are received.

In closing, Chancellor Rogers announced two noteworthy items on the calendar. The UNC Board of Governors will meet at UNC Greensboro and the ECU Board of Trustees will hold its final board meeting of the year at the end of November.

Discussion: Senator John Southworth, from Administration and Finance, stated the NC Treasurer's Office recently shared some concerns about the potential for UNC Health and ECU Health integrations to destabilize the retirement system and put the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS) in violation of federal tax law. Given that it is the only across-the-state benefit that we have to attract people to work for the State of North Carolina, he asked how committed the leadership is to unravel any action that could potentially harm the TSERS program.

Chancellor Rogers suggested having someone who has detailed knowledge of the state health plan to provide a legal analysis on the legislation. He added this is a very complex set of legislative changes that were intended to focus on the clinical operations of UNC Health and ECU Health. Some clinical employees could be impacted due to this integrated effort. This only applies to new employees at the Brody School of Medicine and the School of Dental Medicine. If you leave your position and take a new position in a clinical space with one of these units, you will be affected by this change. These folks will be placed in the Optional Retirement Program (ORP) automatically and will not be able to enroll in TSERS.

Chair Dana Lopez, from Student Affairs, stated it looks like it may affect recruitment efforts of current state employees with TSERS who work outside of the university from coming to work for ECU if they will lose that benefit. She asked if leadership is looking at this change from a recruitment perspective, and if so, what measures are being taken.

Chancellor Rogers replied it will affect any new employee coming into an ECU Health operation or clinical role at the School of Dental Medicine and Brody School of Medicine. This would provide the

opportunity to reset salary expectations, since ECU is not always able to pay at the same rate that competitors pay in the health care space, which could provide value.

Senator John Southworth asked for clarification regarding removing the pension system and increasing the pay of employees. He asked if we expect to see salary levels aligned with business.

Chancellor Rogers replied that the salary alignment would only be with respect to clinical employees.

Senator John Southworth stated he would like to hear more about the potential for these regulations to affect all TSERS members since it was mentioned by the NC Treasurer. As a state employee who does not work in a clinical unit, he is concerned about losing TSERS.

Chancellor Rogers answered that there is no intent to touch anything outside of the clinical space.

Artificial Intelligence – What it is and why it matters

Zach Loch, Associate Vice Chancellor & Chief Information Officer

Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Officer Zach Loch spoke on artificial intelligence (AI), how it is innovative, and ways it might impact campus. He discussed the technologies that have evolved in industry throughout the industrial revolutions. Industry 1.0 refers to our past society based on the agriculture and farming industry. This then gave rise to factories and factory work. Industry 3.0 refers to the information age, where we have access to unprecedented amounts of data, analytics, and reporting to make better decisions for our organizations. Currently, we are on the cusp of Industry 4.0, where we have access to artificial intelligence tools and other technologies that help us carry out tasks and duties to be efficient and productive.

There is no standard definition for AI, as different industry groups will provide different descriptions; however, Encyclopedia Britannica states AI is the ability of a computer, or a robot controlled by a computer, to do tasks that are usually done by humans because they require human intelligence and discernment. Associate VC Loch views AI as a beneficial source that provide tools, rather than a path that leads to mass layoffs and the collapse of industries. AI includes several disciplines, such as cognitive computing, computer vision, machine learning, neural networks, deep learning, and natural language processing. Faculty in ECU's Computer Science department have dedicated years to specific disciplines within artificial intelligence.

Computer vision is the ability for a computer recognize patterns in images (i.e., training a computer to identify the differences between a horse and a zebra by scanning one thousand images). He referenced how Google photos identifies specific people in photos. Facial recognition software unlocks devices based on profiles. Natural language processing involves the computer understanding what to do when someone asks it to perform a task.

A timeline was displayed which showed major AI milestones dating back to the 1950s with the Alan Turing "Turing Test." The timeline included breakthroughs in AI and also long periods where there was little to no advancement. These periods of slow productivity are referred to as AI winters. This started to change in 1997 when IBM created a machine to play chess and it beat the current world champion. In 2011, IBM

Watson won on the game show *Jeopardy!* ChatGPT was released in 2022, and this technology is hugely different in breadth and scope. You can ask it to tell jokes, write poetry, or explain nuclear power at the level of a fifth grader. Associate VC Loch encouraged staff to try ChatGPT, since it is accessible to anyone. One million people used ChatGPT within the first five days, which provided the developers with data and transcripts to fine-tune the results of their software. Microsoft has invested \$10 billion into this product. ECU uses Microsoft products, so these tools will impact employees, students, classroom-use, privacy and security, and policies on campus.

ECU will be able experience AI in many ways. Searches will become more powerful as they will provide answers specifically tailored to the question. Microsoft has already started to incorporate this in Bing. For example, a search will not only scan the internet for results, but also will have access to Microsoft Teams and OneDrive, and documents such as Word and Excel. It may provide a transcript from a video meeting that happened two years ago. Therefore, it has the power to combine the search results with corporate data. We will not see these types of results with Google searches since Google gets paid for advertisements.

AI digital assistants will be built into Microsoft, which will allow you to schedule meetings more easily. For example, you will be able to state the topic, timeframe, and attendees, and the AI digital assistant will pull information together from everyone's calendars to schedule that meeting. It will also summarize information from a meeting. We will probably see these tools in the next six to twelve months.

Associate VC Loch shared a video that displayed examples of tools that will be embedded in Microsoft products which will provide powerful results. Those included how AI will assist with reporting and analytics. Other vendors will be including these types of capabilities into their products (i.e., streamlined process for requesting time off and receiving approval). ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Adobe Firefly are examples of software with AI tools.

Experimentation is being used to improve industry. For example, a concrete density scanner can check the density at different depths to determine if there is a weakness in the structure. Another example provided is Microsoft HoloLens, where specialized goggles allow the user to see the piece of equipment they are working on and the instructions for putting the equipment together is overlaid on the goggles. Astronauts can wear these goggles and see instructions through augmented reality on how to maintain their equipment, rather than having to flip through a tangible manual.

There are always some concerns with AI and corporate data, such as privacy and security, crime and fraud, the accuracy of information, and life and safety decisions. You always need to be skeptical and keep a keen eye for fraudulent activity. The White House has issued an executive order around safety and security for artificial intelligence. Many companies will have to provide safety reports to the government if it has a life and safety component.

A committee has been pulled together at ECU which will look at AI policies and best practices that will be needed for the campus community. They will delve into the products and analytics as they become available to understand how they can be used and help with efficiency and effectiveness. Associate VC Loch encouraged staff to become familiar with the tools that are already available in the workplace environment. He also warned that staff should use discretion on how these tools can be used.

Approval of Minutes

Christiana Shoopman, Staff Senate Secretary

The minutes from the October 17, 2023 meeting were emailed to members of the Staff Senate and no corrections were received. The meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Executive Committee Updates

Staff Senate Executive Committee

UNC Staff Assembly

Chair Dana Lopez, from Student Affairs, announced that ECU staff delegates attended the UNC System Staff Assembly meeting in Wilmington, NC from October 23-24, 2023. A Human Resources update was provided during this meeting, which was recently emailed to members of the Staff Senate. Chair Lopez urged staff to review the document and send questions to staffsenate@ecu.edu.

During the UNC Staff Assembly meeting, the UNC Thomas W. Ross Senior Visionary Leadership Award was presented. The award was created in 2015 to celebrate a member of the UNC Staff Assembly who has proven to be an exemplary leader and one who inspires a shared vision on their campus and in the UNC Staff Assembly. This individual's accomplishments are consistent with the leadership characteristics exemplified by Thomas Ross during his tenure as UNC System President. This year's award went to Garrett Killian, from the Information Technology and Computing Services (ITCS) department at ECU. Chair Lopez stated it was exciting that he was present at the meeting and to see him presented with this award.

Elections for the UNC Staff Assembly were held in October of 2023 to fill the Executive Committee and At-Large Delegate positions. ECU continues to have representation at the UNC Staff Assembly level. Senator Todd Inman will continue his second year as an At-Large Delegate and Garrett Killian will be the Co-Director for the 2024 Chancellors' Cup Golf Tournament. ECU's delegates are Past Staff Senate Chair Aisha Powell, Chair Dana Lopez, Chair-Elect Crystal Hildenbrand, and the alternate delegate is Senator Jennifer Muir.

Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate recently approved the faculty constitution and by-laws to include the Staff Senate Chair, or a representative of the position, as an ex-officio member of Faculty Senate. The Staff Senate Chair will be invited to Faculty Senate meetings and will have speaking privileges. Chair Lopez thanked the Faculty Senate for the opportunity to continue to practice the principle of shared governance.

UNC Retirement Plan

Vice-Chair Lauren Thorn announced that the UNC System's retirement plan is moving from two recordkeepers, TIAA and Fidelity, to a single retirement plan recordkeeper, which was awarded to TIAA. Beginning on September 1, 2023, for all new employees, retirement contributions will only be made to the accounts with TIAA. Those who have funds split between TIAA and Fidelity will be required to use TIAA on or after January 1, 2024. No action will be required by you. Those affected should have received a transition guide which highlights details about the fund lineup available through TIAA, the fund mapping process, key dates, and decision support resources.

The purpose of this decision was to streamline the enrollment process to better leverage the University's \$10 billion in defined contribution retirement plan assets to reduce recordkeeping expenses, to consider and implement investment solutions that better fit the unique aspects of employee demographics, and to provide employees with a clear and consistent financial education and advice program. Questions may be directed to the ECU Benefits Office at retirement@ecu.edu.

Upcoming ECU Board of Trustees' Meeting

Secretary Christiana Shoopman stated that the Board of Trustees will meet on Friday, December 1, at 9:00 a.m. in the Main Campus Student Center and she encouraged staff to watch online. The link to view this meeting will be posted on the Board of Trustees website closer to the date of that meeting at <https://board-of-trustees.ecu.edu>.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Stephanie Stroud thanked Vice Chancellor Coleman and her staff for putting in the work that allowed employees to receive the legislative increase in our paychecks quickly.

Regarding the Staff Senate budget, the System Office has not provided reimbursement from travel in July of 2023, but has issued reimbursement for travel for the Chancellors' Cup Golf Tournament. A professional membership for Canva Pro has been purchased for the Communications and Marketing Committee to assist with creating materials for Staff Senate events. Contact Treasurer Stroud directly or send an email to staffsenate@ecu.edu to request funds for upcoming events.

Student Government Association (SGA)

Parliamentarian Joshua Crockett stated SGA is looking for an Elections Advisor to assist with elections that will take place in January and February of 2024. Interested parties should contact Joshua Crockett. Questions related to the position can be directed to him (sgaag@ecu.edu) or to SGA Advisor Aleshia Hunt (hunta@ecu.edu).

SGA is working on sustainability initiatives in the residence halls and dining halls to make sure they are in-line with the strategic plan. The SGA approved \$4,235 for experiential learning for students to attend the Super Bowl, which was not able to be funded by the Provost this year. They held a second Swipe Out Hunger Day of Giving, and received 144 meals, almost doubling the total from earlier in the semester. SGA will also donate the same number of meals received, for a grand total of 370 meals donated this year.

At the recommendation of staff, SGA will be bringing back "Who's at the Helm" which is a weekly reel on Instagram about SGA's activities. Three current SGA resolutions include the Crown Act Support Resolution, advocating for academic transparency which involves posting syllabi early and ensuring grades are posted before the designated drop and withdrawal periods, and encouraging the implementation of the First Day Complete Barnes and Noble program for access and affordability of books for students.

The SGA has passed their budget, and Parliamentarian Crockett urged staff to reach out to him if Staff Senate needs any funding involving collaborations with students.

Committee Updates

By-Laws Committee

Senator John Southworth, Chair of the By-Laws Committee, reported that 25 people responded to the survey created to receive feedback regarding Staff Senate's relationship with SGA and the Parliamentarian role. A diverse set of comments were received and those will be further reviewed before any changes to the by-laws are presented to Staff Senate for a vote.

The By-Laws Committee will review by-laws of other UNC System universities to see how those governing bodies may differ from ECU's Staff Senate. A future update to the by-laws will be needed due to the new classification of the School of Dental Medicine staff. Clinical Support Services (CSS) staff in those areas will now be classified as Dental Medicine Support Staff (DMSS), and this classification needs to be documented appropriately in the Staff Senate by-laws.

Communication and Marketing Committee

Senator Chad Carwein, Chair of the Communication and Marketing Committee, announced listings have been updated on the Staff Senate Pirate Perks website, and the committee is using Canva Pro to create flyers for Staff Senate-sponsored events. He thanked alternate Senator Kimrey Miko for uploading pictures for the member directory on the Staff Senate's website. Those who need a photo taken for the directory can sign up in Teams for slots on November 14 and 16, 2023, from 2:00 -3:00 pm.

Discussion: Chair Lopez added she reached out to the Communication and Marketing Committee regarding the Pirate Profiles that are highlighted by News Services on ECU's website, and thanked Senator Erin Gray for working diligently to promote staff. News Services contacts the deans of the different colleges for recommendations on who to highlight, but there is a concern that staff are not recognized as often as faculty and students. Chair Lopez has targeted several vice chancellors that oversee divisions that do not have academics below them, to ask for names to recognize more staff in the Pirate Profiles.

Diversity Committee

Senator Coleman Cannon Hinson provided the update for the Diversity Committee. They are awaiting SGA to pass their version of the Labor Acknowledgement before reciting this statement at Staff Senate meetings. Senator Aisha Powell and Faculty Senator Dr. Rachel Roper attended the SGA meeting on November 1, 2023, to share the version passed by the Staff and Faculty Senate with support of the Black Faculty Organization, Organization of Black Staff, Black Student Union, and the Chancellor's Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The nomination rankings for the Women's Leadership Panel have been reviewed and the top four nominees have been contacted. The finalized list of panelists will be announced at the December meeting. Staff were urged to begin brainstorming questions to ask the panelists.

November is Native American Heritage Month, also known as American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. An Indigenous Crafts and Conservation event will be held on Tuesday, November 28, 2023, and a Pride dinner and celebration will take place on January 6, 2024, at 5:00 pm at the Main Campus Student Center with Sandy Thurman as the keynote speaker. Individual tickets may be purchased for \$75, or a table

for eight can be purchased for \$600. The American Society for Microbiology will host a free screening of the documentary “Arise Firebird” which can be viewed from November 10-13, 2023.

Human Resources Committee

Senator Michelle Smith provided the update for the HR Committee. The service event for the food bank is scheduled for November 15, 2023, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Eight volunteer spots are still available on the sign-up sheet on Teams. She urged staff to use their community service leave hours to volunteer for this service project.

They have received six nominations for the Staff Emeritus awards. Senator Smith encouraged people to nominate qualified staff members. The nomination period will close on November 30, 2023.

Discussion: Chair Lopez is trying to obtain a list of staff who have submitted forms for retirement so that supervisors can be targeted in hopes of receiving additional nominations.

Membership Committee

Senator Joseph Moore, the Chair of the of the Membership Committee, provided an update on vacant seats in the Staff Senate. Two alternate seats are still open in Athletics, two senator and two alternate seats are vacant for the Brody School of Medicine, and one alternate seat is available and University Advancement. He thanked those who have submitted nominations to help with this initiative and encouraged senators to continue nominating staff who would be willing to serve. Nominations will open from January 2-17, 2024, and elections will be held on February 19, 2024.

Recognition and Rewards Committee

Treasurer Stephanie Stroud provided the update for the Recognition and Rewards Committee. She thanked this committee and the volunteers for making this year’s Wellness Walk a success. The vendors and ECU staff expressed their gratitude for this event.

Academy Sports is providing ECU an additional opportunity to shop with a 20% off coupon that can be used in-store or online during the weekend of December 8-10, 2023.

Their committee will begin focusing on Staff Appreciation Month, which will be held in April of 2024. The Faulkner Gallery in Joyner Library has been reserved for the Outstanding Staff Awards ceremony for April 24, 2024, from 3:00-4:00 pm. Senator Amy Eason and Past Chair Aisha Powell have planned a walk-through for this space later this month.

Scholarship Committee

Senator Michelle Bone, Chair of the Scholarship Committee, stated the scholarship application period is open and will close in January of 2024. They will continue to work on the rubric and will receive training on assessment tools for reviewing the nominations.

The online auction has been postponed until Staff Appreciation month. Donations can be given to Senator Bone. She will post a letter that senators can use to ask businesses if they would like to donate items for this event.

Leadership and Professional Development Committee

Chair Dana Lopez announced there were no updates from the Leadership and Professional Development Committee at this time.

Old Business

Dana Lopez, Chair

The reading of the Labor Acknowledgement will be postponed until the December Staff Senate meeting.

New Business

Dana Lopez, Chair

Format of Future Meetings

Chair Dana Lopez opened the floor for discussion regarding the format of future meetings. Several members are remote employees who want to be a part of Staff Senate. Chair Lopez wants to be very inclusive of all staff and allow those who want to participate to have the meeting format that works for their role. She also wants to encourage and increase engagement as much as possible.

Discussion: Senator Chad Carwein, from Administration and Finance, stated it is easier to engage when holding meetings in-person and can be distracting to attend a meeting from your desk due to phone calls, emails, and people stopping by your office. It is good to meet in-person as much as we can, but he does think Staff Senate should accommodate others. He would vote for a hybrid format for meetings, even though it is more difficult to schedule, and he appreciates the effort of those who plan the logistics.

Senator John Southworth, from Administration and Finance, added the concern that if meetings are offered as hybrid that no one will show up to the face-to-face meetings. He suggested that only staff who are classified as being 100% remote employees be able to attend meetings remotely, or alternatively, allow anyone to attend remotely, but be in-person to vote. He agrees that Staff Senate should be inclusive in any way we can especially since we are trying to fill vacant seats.

Chair Dana Lopez requested clarification from Senator Southworth on his suggestion.

Senator John Southworth responded that his stance is that if staff are 100% remote, they should be able vote while attending the meeting remotely. This may help remote workers feel more included in the process.

Chair Dana Lopez added that there are rules regarding absences, which have not necessarily been upheld this semester, primarily because we knew this discussion was going to occur. Many people who have stated they will be absent from the meeting have said they will attend remotely or watch online when they are able.

Senator Laura Fanning, from Administration and Finance, suggested that Staff Senate rotate the format of meetings every other month. One month would be in-person, followed by the next month being a remote meeting. She sometimes feels pressure balancing her job and attending in-person meetings monthly, since her job can be demanding at times. Many of her meetings are remotod and stacked back-to-back. She is having to schedule travel time into her calendar because of this issue.

Senator Madeline O'Connor, from Student Affairs, attended an event last year where all remote attendees had to show themselves on camera, so they could be seen and included in the meeting.

Chair Dana Lopez explained that this is a part of requiring the cameras to be on when you are attending virtually. UNC Staff Assembly has these same rules.

Senator Margaret Moody, from Academic Affairs, does not like having the camera on when she attends remotely.

Senator John Southworth, from Administration and Finance, explained there are additional logistics involved in doing what Senator O'Connor mentioned. He thanked John Bowling for providing the live-stream services across campus. ECU does not currently have the service to provide support for live, online meetings where people are interacting back and forth. Senator Southworth stated he could provide this service, but if he did, he would not be able to serve as a Senator. Associate VC Zach Loch could be asked if there is a way to obtain resources to provide this type of service.

Chair Dana Lopez asked if Teams could be used.

Senator John Southworth agreed that Teams could be used for the meetings, but there are logistics involved that may make it difficult. Staff Senate could try to meet via Teams on our own, but he reiterated it is nice to have ITCS to handle that for us.

Chair Dana Lopez stated that the feedback will be taken back to the Executive Committee, who will either decide or bring it back to Staff Senate for a vote. She wants to take this matter seriously and act quickly since this is determining if some folks continue to serve and also if new people want to join Staff Senate. This would not affect anyone until January, at the earliest.

Retirement Recognition and Celebrations

Chair-Elect Crystal Hildenbrand stated that Past Chair Aisha Powell mentioned the topic of inequity in retirement celebrations last year. UNC-W has a tiered approach for retirement celebrations. They use the employee's years of service to determine the amount of funds available for catering a reception and purchasing a tangible gift. A representative from UNC Pembroke provided the Staff Assembly with examples of inequities in retirement celebrations across their campus. A lavish reception was held for a Vice Chancellor who retired with 30 years of service, but a housekeeper who retired with 30 years of service received a cake.

Discussion: Senator Todd Inman, from Administration and Finance, asked if Staff Senate knows how many people retire from ECU per year and where the money comes from the support retirement parties.

Chair-Elect Crystal Hildenbrand clarified that a department at UNC-W had the tiered approach for retirement celebrations and does not think it was applied across the university.

Chair Dana Lopez added that these discussions are occurring with the Chancellor and his Cabinet. Once Staff Senate can get an idea of what we would like to do, we can take those ideas to HR, obtain the numbers of potential retirees, and present that to the Chancellor. At this time, the intent is to get some ideas of what

we would like on that list, and then see if they can accommodate those requests. Chair Lopez likes the departmental tiered approach at UNC-W where the employee's title did not matter. It was based on their years of service. She is interested in getting feedback and ideas on other variations of this model.

Senator Michelle Smith, from Academic Affairs, stated in her college it depends on the budget and the retiree's years of service. For example, if someone retires from the Dean's Office it is up to the Dean's foundation funds to pay for that retirement party. If they retire from Elementary Education, it is up to that department as to what can be held. It comes down to money. Some staff do not want retirement parties. She added there is a model with a cap on the amount of money that can be spent on a gift based on years of service.

Senator Joseph Moore, from Academic Affairs, agrees with the scale based on your years of service. Budget always is an issue. Several employees have recently retired in his college. Some want to have a party while others do not. Many times, donations are taken from colleagues to present a lump sum check to the retiree. He agrees with the sliding scale, which gives a baseline for all staff employees. We would have no control over a department who wishes to give additional money.

Chair Dana Lopez reiterated the idea to make sure everyone receives the baseline. If a department can afford to do more, they have that choice. If a retiree does not want a retirement party, meaning they actively decline, those wishes should be respected. Regarding the gift, this is a number we assemble and discuss with the Chancellor's Cabinet. It does not mean it will get approved. Discussions that lead to resolutions can be sent up the chain for approval. It will not have a chance for approval if something is not put together. The idea that Staff Senate is presenting is that the funds do not come out of each department, but if the department wants to give additional monies, they may.

Senator Laura Fanning added that the exact number of expected retirements would be needed to be able to budget for these celebrations. These would need to be planned a year in advance.

Senator Kathy Delk, from Administration and Finance, explained that when she worked for the county, retirement celebrations were handled by HR, as they knew when people were retiring and could ask if those retirees wanted a celebration. HR also handled the caterer. Having a budget already in place would be the only way to make it fair across the board.

Chair Dana Lopez will ask the HR Committee to reach out to ECU HR to get data regarding retirement numbers from the last few years and ask what the forecast looks for future retirees. Those numbers can then be presented at the December meeting. A proposal can be created depending on the information received by the HR Committee.

In closing, Chair Dana Lopez announced the next Staff Senate meeting will be held on December 14, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. at the East Carolina Heart Institute (ECHI) Auditorium.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Meeting minutes were taken and prepared by Staff Senate Secretary, Christiana Shoopman.
Minutes approved 12/14/2023