

Staff Senate Monthly Meeting

November 14, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.
East Carolina Heart Institute Auditorium
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: Coleman Cannon Hinson (Brody School of Medicine), Jennifer Cranford (Academic Affairs), Devin Fagnano (Brody School of Medicine), Katrina Harper (Brody School of Medicine), Gary Martin (Administration & Finance), Moses McDaniel (Brody School of Medicine)

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

Approval of Minutes

Jenna Boardman, Staff Senate Secretary

The October 10, 2024, meeting minutes were emailed to Staff Senate members. No corrections were received, and the minutes were approved.

Reading of Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

Aleshia Hunt, SGA Advisor

SGA Advisor Aleshia Hunt read the ECU Land Acknowledgement - “We acknowledge the Tuscarora people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Greenville consumes. We pay respect to the eight state-recognized tribes of North Carolina; Coharie, Eastern Band of Cherokee, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Meherrin, Occaneechi Band of Saponi, Sappony, and Waccamaw-Siouan, all Nations, and their elders past, present, and emerging.”

Cybersecurity Awareness for University Staff **Dr. Mark Webster, Chief Information Security Officer**

Dr. Mark Webster addressed the pressing challenges and strategies in cybersecurity for higher education. He commenced with an overview of the education sector's cyber threats, emphasizing the importance of building cyber resilience. Higher education remains a primary target for phishing, ransomware, and other cyberattacks. Reports highlight a 79% rise in ransomware attacks in 2023, with K-12 and higher education institutions significantly impacted.

The presentation explored the top attack patterns—social engineering, system intrusion, and human errors—identified in the 2024 Data Breach Investigations Report. Emphasis was placed on financial motives driving 98% of these attacks. Notable incidents involving North Carolina institutions underscored the local relevance of these issues.

Dr. Webster detailed the university's Information Security Program, guided by policies, ISO 27002 standards, and cybersecurity frameworks. The program's pillars include awareness training, risk management, and robust incident response protocols. Monthly security bulletins and phishing simulations aim to cultivate a culture of security awareness. A cybersecurity fundamentals course for students was also introduced, covering essential topics like phishing and password security.

Addressing risk management, the university collaborates with ethical hackers for security assessments and implements third-party software reviews to mitigate risks. Continuous vulnerability management ensures the integrity of campus systems, although the dynamic nature of threats requires constant vigilance. Incident response was highlighted as a critical function supported by the Cybersecurity Operations Center (CSoC). Effective collaboration with data stewards ensures sensitive data remains protected during security incidents.

The presentation concluded with a discussion on multifactor authentication (MFA) and the strategic transition to more secure methods, such as the Microsoft Authenticator app and hardware solutions like YubiKey. The speaker emphasized ongoing efforts to improve cyber resiliency and expressed gratitude for staff contributions to maintaining a secure environment.

Attendees raised questions about Wi-Fi outages, MFA implementation, and alternative authentication methods, fostering a candid dialogue about cybersecurity strategies and challenges. The session ended with Dr. Webster acknowledging the collective effort required to safeguard university data.

Employee Engagement Survey Results

Kitty Wetherington, Associate Vice Chancellor of Well-Being and Success

Kitty Wetherington, Associate Vice Chancellor of Well-Being and Success, presented an overview of the 2024 UNC System Employee Engagement Survey results. She began by explaining the survey's purpose, its administration by ModernThink, and the changes made over its iterations since 2018. The 2024 survey included 41 statements, expanding on areas identified as opportunities for improvement in prior surveys. Conducted between March and April, the survey had a 42% response rate, consistent with 2022 and slightly above the UNC System aggregate of 40%.

The presentation highlighted key trends and findings. Overall, employee positivity rose from 58% in 2018 and 2020 to 66% in 2022, maintaining that level in 2024. Dimensions such as job satisfaction (81%) and well-being (74%) were strengths, showing marked improvement over previous years. However, areas like confidence in senior leadership and performance management fell into the "warrants attention" category.

Specific to staff responses, the top-rated statement was aligned with the institution's mission, with 91% agreeing that they understood their role's contribution. Other high scores included meaningful work (84%) and departmental support for diversity (83%). However, the bottom-rated statements revealed concerns, such as performance-based promotions (46% agreement) and meaningful recognition and awards (45%). Low-performance handling and teamwork across the institution were noted as areas needing improvement.

Looking forward, Ms. Wetherington outlined the next steps, including focus groups—termed "People Success Roundtables"—to gather recommendations for addressing identified challenges. These groups will aim to ensure representation across campuses and employment categories. While specific plans are still in development, they are scheduled to begin in the new year to avoid the holiday season.

In response to audience questions, Ms. Wetherington clarified that data is being shared with divisional leadership for targeted improvements. She emphasized the importance of fostering communication at multiple levels and encouraged feedback to enhance future efforts. The presentation concluded with gratitude for staff participation and collaboration in addressing survey insights.

Faculty Senate Update

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

Dr. Anne Ticknor provided an update from the Faculty Senate, beginning with a recommendation to view Chancellor Rogers' recent remarks at the Faculty Senate meeting. She encouraged attendees to review recordings and minutes as they cover critical campus developments.

She discussed ongoing revisions to committee charges and memberships, particularly considering organizational changes under the strong provost model. Three committees presented updates, including adjustments to ex-officio membership due to shifts in administrative divisions. One committee,

formerly the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, has renamed itself, updated its ex-officio membership, and revised its responsibilities. These changes will be voted on during the December Faculty Senate meeting. Detailed agenda materials are available on the Faculty Senate website for further review.

Dr. Ticknor highlighted an upcoming general education program listening session scheduled for the following Wednesday. This session will initiate a review of the general education program, which has not been revisited since before 2018, despite significant changes like the shift to 120-credit-hour undergraduate programs. The aim is to ensure the program aligns with current academic and institutional goals.

She mentioned that the December Faculty Senate meeting will include a presentation on fiscal health recommendations, which may also be addressed in an open forum. Details on the forum's timing remain pending.

From the recent UNC Board of Governors meeting, Dr. Ticknor shared positive news about enrollment, which has increased by 2.2% across the system. ECU's enrollment rose by nearly 200 students, alleviating some budgetary concerns. Additionally, ECU ranked second among institutions for transfer student enrollment, reflecting efforts to enhance accessibility.

Dr. Ticknor provided updates on the Faculty Realignment Incentive Program (FRIP), designed to offer early retirement incentives for tenured faculty meeting specific eligibility criteria. ECU was allocated \$6.8 million for this program and is on track to utilize the full amount. She noted that the success of FRIP system-wide might lead to its continuation in the future, though no definitive decisions have been made.

Addressing faculty concerns, Dr. Ticknor acknowledged frustrations about senior leadership, a recurring low-rated area in faculty surveys. She emphasized the importance of understanding the context when evaluating leadership at different levels and encouraged faculty to voice their concerns directly to her as their representative.

Dr. Ticknor also clarified compliance with institutional neutrality guidelines related to committee work, specifically the revised charge and structure of the former DEI Committee. She highlighted ECU's unique position within the UNC system regarding financial support and administrative integration for such committees.

Dr. Ticknor closed by encouraging ongoing collaboration between faculty and staff and welcomed any ideas or questions.

Attorney General of the Student Government Association (SGA), Miss Emily Bronson, provided an update on SGA activities. The Food for Fines program, a partnership between SGA, the Purple Pantry, and ECU Parking, kicked off this past week. This initiative started and piloted by Vice President Barefoot, allows students, staff, or anyone who receives a parking citation on campus by ECU Parking Services to bring canned goods and other nonperishable food items to the Parking Services office to donate to the Purple Pantry instead of paying the fine monetarily. Our First-year Shipmate shadowing program students all applied to the Student Assembly for next semester as college, school, at-large, and class representatives. The review of their applications starts today. The President's Parlay Newsletter update was emailed to students via list serve last week, giving them a synopsis of the past 6 months in SGA and the initiatives and goals we accomplished.

Treasurer's Report

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Chair Hildenbrand presented this month's Treasurer's Report in Senator Jones' absence. She noted that the report had been emailed to all members for detailed review. Highlights included several reimbursements from the state office for the Chancellor's transportation to the Chancellor's Cup Golf Tournament. She explained that expenses for the tournament were initially covered but have since been reimbursed.

Additionally, the report included a stipend for the Staff Senate Chair. Chair Hildenbrand mentioned that she would provide further details about the stipend during the Executive Committee report.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee

Chair Crystal Hildenbrand provided a comprehensive update from the Executive Committee, addressing several important initiatives and updates. She announced that the Staff Senate Chair will now receive a \$3,000 stipend to compensate for the additional duties of the role. The stipend, distributed throughout the service year (June 1–May 31), starts this year and is intended to encourage more individuals to run for Chair-Elect in May.

Hildenbrand confirmed the transition of the state health plan from Blue Cross Blue Shield to Aetna, effective January 1, 2025. She also dispelled rumors about the delayed December payroll, stating that the UNC System has ensured paychecks will be issued on December 20, before the holidays. Additionally, when Brody Clinic employees vacate positions, those roles will transition to ECU Health positions over time, impacting Staff Senate representation. The Chancellor confirmed that this process will happen gradually.

Regarding leave policies, Hildenbrand shared that voluntary shared leave cannot be shared across institutions, but additional leave was provided to employees in areas affected by Hurricane Helene. Employees were also granted two extra days of community service leave for use by December 31, 2024. A new personal leave policy, effective January 1, 2025, offers more leave days but limits

carryover to encourage employees to use their time off. She highlighted a significant win for state employees: a bereavement leave policy providing 40 hours of paid leave for the loss of immediate family members, with 8 hours for the loss of a colleague. This policy is retroactive to September 27, 2024, for those affected by Hurricane Helene.

Hildenbrand announced the creation of a Committee Realignment Task Force, which will review committee structures, charges, and responsibilities. The task force will report recommendations by April 2025, guided by survey results. Volunteers are needed to chair this task force. Additionally, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities is seeking two Staff Senate representatives for the Code of Conduct Revisions Committee, which will begin work in December and conclude by February.

In her announcements, Hildenbrand encouraged staff to complete the POSO Restructuring Survey and utilize the "Let Your Voice Be Heard" forum for comments, questions, and feedback, which are reviewed with the Chancellor. She shared that ECU will host the UNC Staff Assembly Meeting in April, welcoming delegates from all 17 institutions, with more details to come. Hildenbrand also noted that the UNC System received 143 applications for the Janet B. Royster Memorial Scholarship, with each UNC institution awarding one recipient, except UNC Pembroke, which will have two winners this year. Lastly, she reminded staff of the upcoming open IT assessment forums on December 4 and 5, designed to address IT challenges and improve services.

Hildenbrand concluded by thanking members for their engagement.

By-Laws Committee

Senator John Southworth provided an update from the Bylaws Committee, focusing on recent progress and ongoing discussions. He reported that the committee has finalized the logistical work associated with the changes voted on in September. These changes included updates to committee structures and adjustments related to the People Operations Success and Opportunity (POSO) framework.

With those updates now complete, the committee is preparing to continue discussions initiated last month regarding potential further bylaw changes. Southworth noted that the committee is ready to address any new adjustments as discussions progress.

Communication and Marketing Committee

Senator Erin Gray, chair of the Communication and Marketing Committee, provided an update on recent initiatives. She began by expressing gratitude to Michelle Bone and Kimrey Miko for their efforts in setting up and taking headshots, which are essential for updating the website. Gray reminded members to submit their final photo requests as soon as possible. She encouraged those who missed the headshot session to reach out, and the committee would do its best to accommodate additional photo needs.

Continuing with the committee's focus on highlighting various groups, Gray announced that the Membership Committee will be featured this month, and someone will contact that committee soon.

For December, the focus will shift to the Leadership and Professional Development Committee, so she encouraged members to prepare for their turn in the spotlight.

Gray concluded by emphasizing the committee's ongoing efforts to ensure effective communication and representation for all.

Human Resources Committee

Senator Michelle Smith provided an update from the HR Committee, sharing two key reminders:

- **Food Bank Volunteer Opportunity:** The volunteer event at the food bank is scheduled for next Thursday from 1 to 3 PM. Smith encouraged anyone interested to sign up as there is still time to join. The link for sign-ups was shared earlier in the general chat.
- **Staff Emeritus Nominations:** Nominations for Staff Emeritus are open until the end of the month. Smith noted that the number of nominations received so far is low and asked for assistance promoting the opportunity to ensure deserving individuals are recognized.

Smith concluded by encouraging active participation in these initiatives.

Leadership and Professional Development Committee

Chair Joani Zary provided an update from the Leadership & Professional Development Committee, sharing details from their October 28th meeting. The committee welcomed Rob Weatherly, who said he would present at the December Staff Senate meeting. His presentation will cover the structure and leadership roles within the People Operations Success and Opportunity (POSO) team.

The committee also discussed plans for career readiness workshops, potentially scheduled for April, though the month's busy calendar might pose challenges. POSO has agreed to cover any room reservation fees for these workshops, ensuring logistical support.

For the B.A.L.L. event, the committee explored potential speakers. While one declined, Dr. Andy Herdman from the College of Business agreed to speak. Dr. Herdman specializes in leadership and will present at the event, scheduled for Monday, April 28th, in the Black Box Theater. The session will take place in the afternoon, with a final time to be confirmed, either at 2:00 or 3:00 PM.

Zary concluded by thanking the committee and supporters for their ongoing efforts in organizing these professional development opportunities.

Membership Committee

Senator Laura Beth Fanning, Chair of the Membership Committee, provided several updates, highlighting the group's recent meeting and preparation for upcoming nominations. The committee reviewed their timeline and addressed a vacancy within the Academic Affairs (AA) division. Efforts to fill the position are ongoing, with several individuals already approached. While some have declined, the committee remains optimistic about finalizing the replacement by the end of the week.

Fanning mentioned that an email was sent to the Executive Committee earlier in the day to clarify seat allocations due to changes in ECU Health's representation. ECU Health's numbers have decreased, and the committee is seeking guidance on whether their current allocation of five seats should be reduced to four based on the new figures.

Looking ahead, nominations for new and returning members will open in January. Fanning noted that individuals whose terms are ending will receive an email encouraging them to nominate themselves for reelection. She concluded by thanking everyone for their engagement and support.

Recognition and Rewards Committee

Senator Dana Lopez, Chair of the Recognition and Rewards Committee, provided an update from the Rewards & Recognition Committee, starting with gratitude to her team and all participants involved in the recent Wellness Walk. She reported the event's success, noting pleasant, though slightly cool, weather and an impressive turnout. The committee received 152 completed punch cards, estimating total participation at over 200 individuals. Vendors were positioned around the lake, allowing for a full circuit walk, which was well-received. Lopez highlighted positive feedback from vendors, many of whom expressed enthusiasm about returning next year.

Looking ahead, Lopez discussed upcoming initiatives:

- **Staff Appreciation Month (April):** The committee is preparing for the Outstanding Staff Awards, scheduled for May 1 at the Main Campus Student Center and Black Box Theater. Most Vice Chancellors and the Chancellor have confirmed their attendance. The committee is considering increasing the number of awards to reflect the varying sizes of divisions, ensuring fairness in representation.
- **Family Day Event:** Scheduled for April 12 from 1 to 4 PM, the event invites staff and their families to participate. While a rain date has not been set, the committee is optimistic about good weather and will distribute marketing materials closer to the date.

Lopez thanked everyone for their support and encouraged continued engagement in these rewarding initiatives.

Scholarship Committee

Jenny Gregory, co-chair of the Scholarship Committee, provided an update from the Scholarship Committee, outlining recent decisions and upcoming initiatives. The committee met two weeks ago and finalized plans for their annual fundraisers, aiming to conduct one smaller and one larger event:

- **Online Auction (April):** The committee will host the online auction again, with a five-month preparation window to collect items. Gregory emphasized the importance of meeting a firm deadline this year to ensure smooth operations and reduce last-minute additions. She encouraged members to begin gathering items early, even suggesting that unwanted holiday

gifts could be donated. Additionally, each committee will be asked to assemble a themed basket (e.g., “Girls’ Night Out”) for inclusion in the auction, allowing everyone to participate.

- Spirit Nights and Food Trucks: The committee is exploring spirit nights at local restaurants as an easy fundraising option for those who already dine out. They are also considering bringing food trucks, including Chick-fil-A, to the Health Sciences campus for a couple of days in the spring. The model involves purchasing food boxes to sell, a strategy that has performed well in past efforts.
- Scholarship Updates: The fund agreement for the Children of Staff Scholarships has been signed, and the committee is optimistic about opening applications soon.

Gregory concluded by encouraging active participation in these initiatives and thanked the committee and supporters for their contributions to the scholarship program.

Well-Being Committee

Senator Bret Wilson provided an update from the Well-Being Committee, beginning with gratitude to Alesia Hunt for reading the Indigenous Land Acknowledgment at the meeting. He noted it was a thoughtful contribution to the session.

The committee’s recent meeting primarily focused on planning the annual Women Leaders and Issues Panel. Wilson thanked everyone who submitted names for potential panelists and shared that a survey would soon be distributed to narrow the list and finalize panel participants.

Additionally, the committee will send a "save the date" request to the Communications Committee in the coming days to begin promoting the event. Wilson concluded his update by noting there were no further items to report at this time.

Old Business

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Chair Hildenbrand discussed the formation of the Committee Realignment Task Force, which will review the structure, charges, and responsibilities of committees. Each committee will have a representative on the task force, which will use survey results to guide its work. The task force aims to provide recommendations to the Executive Committee by April 2025, with potential bylaw amendments to be voted on in May. Volunteers are encouraged to step forward to chair the task force.

New Business

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Announcements

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair



In closing, Chair Crystal Hildenbrand announced that the next Staff Senate meeting will be held on Thursday, December 12th, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Main Campus Student Center – Room 249.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

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