

Staff Senate Monthly Meeting

December 12, 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

Kristina Page, Staff Senate Vice Chair

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

Approval of Minutes

Kristina Page, Staff Senate Vice Chair

The November 14, 2024, meeting minutes were emailed to Staff Senate members. No corrections were received, and the minutes were approved.

Campus Update

Dr. Philip Rogers, Chancellor

Chancellor Philip Rogers began his remarks by welcoming attendees to the final meeting of 2024 and expressing appreciation for their energy and engagement. He reflected on the exciting atmosphere as ECU prepares for one of its most significant events—graduation—highlighting the collective contributions of the staff and faculty in supporting student success.

The Chancellor acknowledged the recent holiday open house, appreciating the opportunity for colleagues to connect before inclement weather arrived. He extended gratitude to Chairman Jason Poole of the ECU Board of Trustees for his dedicated leadership and wise counsel. Chancellor Rogers emphasized the Board's commitment to ECU's mission and its significant role in advancing the institution.

Highlighting ECU's accomplishments, Chancellor Rogers celebrated the university's recognition as the 2024 recipient of the prestigious C. Peter Magrath Community Engagement Scholarship Award. This honor acknowledges ECU's multi-layered efforts in community engagement, particularly in rural mental health services, through partnerships such as the Marriage and Family Therapy Program. He equated the award to a "national championship" in community engagement and expressed pride in ECU's consistent recognition as a leader in this area.

Additionally, ECU received the APLU Innovation and Economic Prosperity Award in the Talent category, further solidifying its role as an economic and educational hub for Eastern North Carolina. The university also earned a five-year extension of its Innovation and Economic Prosperity University designation, an honor it has held since 2015.

Another significant achievement was being one of only 25 institutions nationwide—and the sole institution in North Carolina—to receive the Carnegie Leadership for Public Purpose Classification. This designation reflects ECU's commitment to public good, aligning with its mission and values. Chancellor Rogers discussed the university's fiscal health and long-term planning, stressing the importance of proactive measures to navigate future challenges, such as enrollment declines and budget constraints. He acknowledged the efforts of faculty and staff in participating in forums and surveys to shape solutions, emphasizing transparency and collaboration in addressing fiscal and technological needs. The Chancellor framed these efforts as critical for positioning ECU to meet future demands while ensuring financial sustainability.

In response to questions about the recent employee engagement survey, Chancellor Rogers noted improvements in most categories compared to previous years. He underscored the university's commitment to perpetual improvement and announced plans for focus groups to develop actionable strategies for enhancing the workplace environment. Recognizing the importance of staff retention, he emphasized creating a culture of care to make ECU an enjoyable and impactful place to work. Chancellor Rogers concluded by thanking the ECU community for their dedication and contributions, wishing everyone a happy New Year, and reiterating his commitment to collaboration and excellence. He expressed optimism for the future and encouraged continued engagement and support for the university's mission.

Update from the Board of Trustees

Mr. Jason Poole, Chairman

Chairman Jason Poole began his report by acknowledging the excitement of the day as graduating students celebrated with their families at the student center. This tradition is marked by the ringing of the ceremonial bell, a symbol introduced at the last Board of Trustees meeting for freshmen and seniors. He expressed gratitude for the invitation to speak at the Staff Senate's winter meeting and emphasized the Board of Trustees' commitment to engaging with faculty, staff, and students.

Mr. Poole provided an overview of the structure and role of the Board of Trustees. The board comprises 13 members: eight appointed by the UNC Board of Governors, two by the North Carolina Senate, two by the House, and the student body president, with full voting rights. Members serve four-year terms, with eligibility for one reappointment, after which they must take a year off before rejoining. The board's primary responsibilities include advising the Board of Governors, the UNC System President, and the ECU Chancellor while also supporting ECU's strategic direction and mission. Their duties encompass budget oversight, personnel actions, tuition and fee recommendations, and advocacy for the university.

The Board's November meeting included several notable activities. The Trustees Award for Distinction was presented to former Board Chair Bob Greczyn and Bill and Frances Cain during the meeting. Mr. Greczyn, currently chair of the ECU Health Board, was recognized for his leadership. Frances Cain was celebrated for her and her late husband, Bill's contributions to ECU athletics and the local arts community. Additionally, police officer Frannie Tarkington was honored as the UNC System Police Officer of the Year for her work supporting individuals navigating trauma. The board committees were active during the meeting. Highlights included:

- Strategy and Innovation Committee: Mustafa Ganja of the American Council on Education presented upcoming changes to the Carnegie Classification framework, emphasizing its importance to ECU's strategic planning.
- Joint University Affairs and Strategy Committees: This session focused on student retention and persistence, with a data-driven approach to improving enrollment management. The February session will address new student acquisition.
- Athletics and Advancement Committee: Updates on student success initiatives included increased scholarships, expanded emergency funds, and enhanced resources for high-impact practices. The Chancellor's Scholarship Initiative was highlighted as a key priority.
- Audit Committee: The committee reviewed enterprise risk management, compliance, and regulatory updates to ensure alignment with institutional and system-wide priorities.
- Budget, Finance, and Infrastructure Committee: The board approved tuition and fee recommendations for the 2025–2026 academic year and celebrated the groundbreaking of a new 195,000-square-foot medical education center on the Health Sciences Campus.

Chairman Poole concluded by expressing gratitude for the dedication of the faculty and staff, which drives progress at ECU and in Eastern North Carolina. He highlighted the Board's appreciation for the university community's support during recent hurricane relief efforts and encouraged everyone to rest during the holidays. The Board remains committed to supporting ECU's mission through education, innovation, and service.

No questions were raised, and Mr. Poole thanked the attendees before concluding his remarks.

Opportunities from POSO

Rob Weatherly, Director of Learning & Organizational Development
People Operations, Success, and Opportunity (POSO)

Rob Weatherly provided an update on professional development initiatives from the People Operations, Success, and Opportunity (POSO) Office. He emphasized the importance of career and professional development, which has been a recurring topic in employee engagement surveys and campus-wide feedback. Rob expressed his department's commitment to expanding opportunities and encouraged supervisors and employees to work collaboratively on Individual Development Plans (IDPs) as part of the performance planning cycle.

Rob outlined several opportunities and resources available to employees:

1. Individual Development Plans (IDPs): Employees are encouraged to work with supervisors to set personalized development goals. These plans should include mentoring, shadowing opportunities, on-campus training, and external professional development. Supervisors were reminded to engage in meaningful conversations about their employees' career aspirations, strengths, and developmental needs.
2. Cornerstone Learning Management System: Cornerstone offers asynchronous training and professional development workshops that employees can complete at their convenience. Workshops are hosted on both the Health Sciences and Main campuses. Employees can search for specific topics of interest and stay informed through monthly newsletters.
3. Pirate Readiness Enhancement Program (PREP): Entering its fourth semester, this program offers structured pathways for professional development. With 86 graduates in the past 18 months, PREP continues to expand, adding new instructors and courses for the spring semester.
4. LinkedIn Learning Partnership: ECU provides faculty, staff, and students with free access to LinkedIn Learning. The platform offers a wide range of certifications and continuing education credits, including programs that would typically cost thousands of dollars. Employees were encouraged to link their ECU accounts to explore certifications and career advancement resources.
5. Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP): In addition to mental health and work-life balance support, the FSAP offers a robust knowledge base with articles and on-demand training on various professional and personal development topics. These resources are also available to household members.

Rob also addressed common questions about using these resources:

- Employees can print transcripts from Cornerstone to document completed training for performance evaluations, though direct integration with career banding systems is not yet available.
- Required or job-related training should be completed during work hours, while personal career development in unrelated fields may need to be pursued outside of work hours.
- Supervisors seeking to assist employees in moving between career bands are encouraged to consult with the Classification and Compensation team for guidance.

Rob highlighted ongoing efforts to brainstorm new programming to meet campus needs, with announcements expected in 2025. He thanked attendees for their engagement and invited questions, emphasizing the shared goal of fostering growth and opportunity at ECU.

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. Anne Ticknor, Chair of the Faculty, began her report by expressing excitement for December and the upcoming graduation. She emphasized the dual mission of supporting students during their time at ECU and celebrating their success as they move forward. She shared updates from the faculty's recent work, highlighting significant topics discussed during their latest meeting.

Dr. Ticknor provided an overview of the fiscal health recommendations, emphasizing the importance of faculty engagement and feedback. While some faculty expressed concerns about the time frame and necessity of the recommendations, Anne supported proactive planning to address potential challenges.

She shared updates on faculty committees, including the renaming and recharging of the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the "Faculty Connection, Access, Retention, and Engagement" (CARE) committee. This change will take effect in January, pending approval from the Chancellor's Office. Additional committee updates included discussions on ex-officio memberships and the reorganization process.

Dr. Ticknor reported on the approval of ECU's first Foundations of American Democracy courses, a new UNC system-wide requirement for incoming students starting after July 1, 2025. These courses address specific learning objectives and will be integrated into existing curriculum pathways to meet capacity demands.

The Distance Education and Learning Technology Committee shared updates on training requirements for new online faculty and ongoing professional development for distance education instructors. Faculty teaching online courses must complete annual training and adhere to specific guidelines for instructional time.

Dr. Ticknor addressed the ongoing focus on faculty workload reporting. With updates to workload policies, all faculty with appointments longer than one year must complete work plans through Faculty 180. This new process requires current academic year information by January 1, with additional input for the next academic year in the spring. Anne acknowledged the challenges of adapting to this new system.

She clarified a previous report, noting that ECU is ranked second among UNC institutions, specifically for community college transfer students rather than all transfer students.

During the Q&A session, Dr. Ticknor responded to questions about policies and practices affecting students and faculty:

- Exam scheduling: Exam times for face-to-face courses are determined by the academic calendar, with exceptions requiring departmental approval. Online courses follow flexible scheduling within exam week.
- Reading Day: Per university policy, Anne reiterated that reading days cannot be used for instructional activities. She encouraged students to report any violations to department chairs or through formal complaint channels.
- Graduation requirements: Concerns about meeting the new democracy course requirements were addressed, and capacity planning was assured to prevent graduation delays.

Dr. Ticknor concluded by thanking everyone for their dedication and encouraging everyone to enjoy the holiday season.

Treasurer's Report

Jennifer Jones, Staff Senate Treasurer

Jennifer Jones presented the Treasurer's Report, which was previously distributed with the meeting agenda and minutes. She provided an overview of the financial accounts and highlighted key updates.

1. State-Funded Account:
 - Beginning Balance: \$10,553
 - Ending Balance: \$9,827
 - The account includes funding for the Staff Senate Chair stipend. The stipend, effective from November 16 through May 31, totals \$3,000 for 17 pay periods.
 - Breakdown per Pay Period:
 - \$176.50 (stipend)
 - \$13.25 (Social Security)
 - \$42.43 (state retirement)
 - \$19.40 (medical insurance)
 - The total cost per pay period is \$251.58, resulting in an annual charge of \$4,276.86 to the Staff Senate budget.
2. State Travel Funds:
 - Beginning Balance: \$4,613.45
 - Ending Balance: -\$1,224.51 (due to pending reimbursements).
 - Notable transactions:
 - The Chancellor's Cup golf tournament travel expenses of \$807.07 were reimbursed on November 4.
 - A correction was noted regarding a reimbursement received in July for fiscal year 2023 expenses, which should not have been included in the current balance.

- Travel expenses for the November Staff Assembly meeting totaled \$1,076.05 for Chair Hildenbrand and Senator Inman, and the reimbursement request has been submitted to the UNC system.
3. Discretionary Funds:
 - Beginning Balance: \$33,248
 - Ending Balance: \$37,398
 - The increase is due to the reimbursement of golf tournament expenses, posted on November 4.
 4. Scholarship Funds:
 - No changes were reported.

Jennifer concluded by opening the floor for questions, but none were raised. The report was accepted as presented.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee

No report.

By-Laws Committee

The Bylaws Committee provided an update on their recent meeting held the previous day. During the meeting, members reviewed the committee's goals for the year and discussed their approach to proposed changes. Emphasis was placed on avoiding unnecessary amendments or actions, ensuring that any updates to the bylaws address specific needs or challenges rather than being proactive without justification.

The committee decided to pause significant bylaw revisions until forthcoming changes in committee structures or operations are finalized, as these updates will likely impact the bylaws. Once those decisions are made, further action will be taken. No immediate changes or recommendations were presented.

Communication and Marketing Committee

No report.

Human Resources Committee

Senator Michelle Smith provided an update from the HR Committee, sharing that during their meeting on Tuesday, they followed up on the volunteer opportunity at the food bank, in which four senators participated along with additional helpers. The group successfully packed 187 boxes for seniors, an impressive accomplishment given the size of the team.

Additionally, the committee reviewed submissions for staff emeritus status. Extending the deadline to December 15 resulted in more submissions.

Leadership and Professional Development Committee

Committee Chair Joani Zary provided an update from the Leadership & Professional Development Committee. The Leadership and Professional Development Committee provided updates on their upcoming initiatives. The B.A.L.L. event is scheduled for April 28th at 2:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theater of the Main Campus Student Center. The featured speaker, Dr. Andrew Herdman, was announced previously, and the committee is currently finalizing the save-the-date graphic and coordinating with Dr. Herdman to confirm the event's title and theme. Additionally, the committee is collaborating with Rob Weatherly to plan career readiness workshops, which are set to take place in April and May. Further details will be shared as planning progresses.

Membership Committee

Senator Laura Beth Fanning, Chair of the Membership Committee, provided several updates. There are currently two vacancies in the athletics division. One nomination for athletics is in process, and training is underway, which is expected to reduce the vacancies to just one alternate position. The committee noted that nominations for new members will begin in January, followed by elections shortly thereafter.

Recognition and Rewards Committee

The Recognition & Rewards Committee shared updates on several initiatives. The "Tickets at Work" program has been launched, allowing employees to save money on shopping and other activities. Planning is underway for Staff Appreciation Week, which will take place from April 7th to 11th, featuring events such as a free meal at the dining hall. Additionally, the Outstanding Staff Awards are scheduled for January, with nominations opening at the start of the semester. Dana will send out nomination information in early 2025. Further updates on these initiatives will be provided as planning progresses.

Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee announced that the scholarship application has officially been distributed across the university after multiple rounds of paperwork and approvals. The application deadline remains January 15th, and members are encouraged to spread the word and encourage eligible individuals to apply.

On the fundraising front, the committee plans to organize an online auction and suggested gathering unwanted holiday gifts for potential donations. Additionally, the committee is exploring a partnership to bring food trucks to the Health Sciences Campus. Efforts are underway to collaborate with Aramark to secure approved vendors and to propose a model where food truck proceeds contribute to scholarships. The goal is to establish a recurring event, either weekly or bi-weekly, starting in the spring semester.

The committee is hopeful about the potential collaboration and plans to continue working with faculty and staff to finalize logistics. As progress is made, updates will be provided.

Well-Being Committee

The Well-Being Committee shared updates on their recent activities. While the committee experienced a member loss due to a transfer, they gained two new members within the week, resulting in a net increase of one member. The primary focus is on planning the Women Leaders at ECU Panel. After nominations and prioritization, the committee has finalized its list of panelists, and invitations have been extended. Once all panelists have accepted, the official announcement will be made. The theme for the panel is "Creating Space to Enhance Employee Well-being and Workforce Success." The next step involves gathering questions for the panelists. Once the panelists are announced, members are encouraged to submit general questions related to the theme or specific questions. Suggestions can be sent directly to the committee for consideration.

Old Business

Crystal Hildenbrand, Staff Senate Chair

Chair Hildenbrand reminded the group that the committee feedback survey is still open and will close at the close of business on Friday, November 13th. The Committee Revision Task Force will use the feedback collected to begin their work.

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, January 9th, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Main Campus Student Center – Room 249.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

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