



## Staff Senate Monthly Meeting

December 14, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.  
East Carolina Heart Institute Auditorium (ECHI)  
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 shared meeting best practices with staff, guests, and those attending virtually. 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 would like to speak at future meetings can notify Staff Senate by emailing [staffsenate@ecu.edu](mailto:staffsenate@ecu.edu).

The agenda has changed to align with other governing bodies on campus. A roll call was conducted to determine if a quorum was present.

#### Roll Call

Christiana Shoopman, Staff Senate Secretary

Senators absent: Lindsay Arnold (Academic Affairs), Dawn Boyd-Cribari (Administration and Finance), Maggie Bryant (Brody School of Medicine), Jennifer Cook (Brody School of Medicine), Margaret Dodson (Brody School of Medicine), Debbie Edwards (Chancellor's Office), Laura Beth Fanning (Administration and Finance), Sammy Jo Fly (Academic Affairs), Patricia Highsmith (Brody School of Medicine), Ophelia Madden (University Advancement), Gary Martin (Administration and Finance), Lauren Thorn (Student Affairs), Carla Williams (Brody School of Medicine), and Kristin Wooten (Brody School of Medicine)

Alternates present: Jenna Boardman (University Advancement), Holly Buck (Academic Affairs), and Summer Edwards (Academic Affairs)

#### Approval of Minutes

Christiana Shoopman, Staff Senate Secretary

The minutes from the November 9, 2023 meeting were emailed to members of the Staff Senate and no corrections were received. The meeting minutes were approved as presented.

## **General Board of Trustees Update**

Jason Poole, ECU Board of Trustees Chairman

ECU's Board of Trustees (BOT) Chairman Jason Poole thanked Chair Dana Lopez for inviting him to speak. He also thanked the staff for their work across campus, helping implement the strategic plan involving student success, public service, and regional transformation. Chairman Poole recognized Chair Lopez for attending BOT meetings and providing updates on behalf of Staff Senate. He stated serving on ECU's BOT for 6.5 years is a wonderful experience, and he will continue in this capacity for the next 18 months.

The ECU Board of Trustees convened at a workshop in Greensboro, N.C., with trustees from the other UNC System universities to receive an update from the UNC Board of Governors (BOG). The Board of Governors' priorities are reflected in ECU's priorities, such as students' access to pursue a university education, student enrollment and success, and the affordability of education. Chairman Poole stressed that everyone across campus can help with enrollment, and the enrollment plan is gaining momentum. With respect to affordability, ECU's Board of Trustees voted to not increase tuition, with the exception of a few select programs that had additional costs. Fees also have not changed. Chairman Poole stated that when tuition is approved, that tuition is frozen for the next four years for incoming first-year students. As long as those students complete their undergraduate degree within four years, their tuition will not increase.

The Board of Governors has adjusted their funding model, which now includes student success metrics rather than funding solely based on student enrollment numbers. Additional funding can be acquired by meeting student success metric goals. The BOG and ECU's BOT are very focused on the student return on investment (ROI). A study was recently performed where ECU students rated their return on investment at 98%, whereas the UNC System-wide results reflected a 94% yield on return on investment. During the previous BOT Strategy and Innovation Committee meeting, an industry-partner panel was held to discuss the workforce pipeline, experiential learning for ECU students, and student success in finding career paths. Students and faculty shared their experiences working with industry partners. Chairman Poole stressed the importance of ECU continually evolving its curriculum to match the workforce needs.

In the future, the ECU Board of Trustees will focus on NCInnovation, which is the public-private partnership to accelerate commercialized innovation, and noted that one of the regional directors is housed at ECU. They will also stay involved in the legislature, helping advocate for Chancellor Rogers' priorities for ECU, which is in-line with the BOG's priorities. The BOT will be speaking about ECU's return on investment at every meeting going forward, due to the changing demographics seen with the reduced population related to student enrollment, and making sure ECU remains competitive in the marketplace.

In closing, Chairman Poole stated to let him, or Staff Senate Chair Dana Lopez know of any topics that staff would like to bring to his attention. His contact information is located on the [ECU Board of Trustees' website](#). He thanked Staff Senate for the opportunity to speak and hopes it will start an annual tradition for a BOT member to present to staff once a year.

**Discussion:** Senator Joani Zary, from the Brody School of Medicine, asked how the return on investment is measured.

Chairman Poole replied that the return on investment is the earning potential that students at ECU have after they graduate. It looks at the cost of education and the earnings of the student after graduation compared to someone who did not go to college.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, commented on the student and faculty panel during the last BOT meeting. She added it would be great to invite staff to take part in the panels, as they bring a unique perspective with respect to the student experience.

Chairman Poole agreed with this idea and stated he would share the suggestion with the chair of the Committee on Strategy and Innovation. He added that it takes everyone on campus to help with enrollment and the success of the university.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, asked Chairman Poole to explain his role and the BOT's role at ECU for new senators who may not be as familiar with the board.

Chairman Poole explained that he is the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the BOT advocates for the university and the Chancellor's priorities. They vote and approve on items such as multi-year contracts for coaches, honorary degrees, and the budget, which also includes tuition and fees. They report their approvals to the Board of Governors.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, asked if any diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives were discussed at the workshop attended by the Board of Trustees members and the Board of Governors.

Chairman Poole replied that DEI was discussed with respect to affordability and access to universities but did not know if it was directly discussed during other portions of the meeting. It may have been discussed at one of the many breakout sessions. He stated he would review the past agenda to see if anything was reported.

Senator Chad Carwein, from Administration and Finance, asked for an update related to the Intersect East project on ECU's Millennial Campus, as he has not heard any mention of this recently.

Chairman Poole responded that Hyster-Yale has taken a significant position in this project. The project slowed a bit due to interest rates and the current economy. The BOT receives updates frequently from the Intersect East partner Elliott Sidewalk. Trying to find partners to lease space has been difficult recently.

Chair Dana Lopez, from Student Affairs, stated that Campus Recreation and Wellness has been asked if an affiliate membership could be included to help recruit people into Intersect East. She asked if there are other benefits that are being offered for these partners.

Chairman Poole answered that he is not aware of other benefits offered, but liked the idea of providing access to facilities and libraries on campus.

## **Financial Wellness for the Holiday Season and New Year**

Kevin Sutton, Director, Financial Wellness

The Director of Financial Wellness, Kevin Sutton, presented on financial services that are offered at ECU and strategies to alleviate financial stress around the holidays. He joined ECU in May of 2023, after previously working at Virginia Tech and the SUNY System in New York. His career has been helping campuses set up financial wellness services. Kevin Sutton has two certifications, with one in budgeting, credit scores, and debt management strategies, and another in financial social work.

ECU's Financial Wellness Hub provides education on topics such as budgeting, credit scores, student loans and understanding repayment plans, debt management strategies (i.e., credit cards, personal loans, and mortgages), the basics of investing and retirement, and money habits and attitudes to manage financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial well-being. In his role at ECU, he serves students, employees, and alumni up to the first year after graduation. ECU is one of the few colleges in the country that has this broad of a service. Employees have access to free workshops and presentations. All employees and alumni speak directly with Kevin. He has a team of ten paid interns, half of whom are finance majors, who provide the same services for the undergraduate population. One of his interns was referred by Senator Melissa Parks. This service offers a unique experience for students.

Kevin Sutton shared the most common topics he sees during appointments with employees. These include discussing finances with your partner, reducing food expenses, and discussing credit card debt management. Personal finances can be stressful, and studies have shown that high financial stress can lower a student's academic performance and an employee's job satisfaction. He stated one of the ways to navigate stress is to have a plan and he can help create individualized plans by appointment. Kevin also helps with short, mid-term financial planning for gifts, vacations, and children's expenses (i.e., braces). A typology assessment can be used to gain insights into your own behaviors, habits, and attitudes.

Six money "Habits and Attitude" personalities can be used to assess your behaviors related to money. Each category is associated with two positive words and two critical words. Kevin led an activity for the audience to assess which categories fit their personality.

- Status: money helps present a positive image
  - generous, impressive, superficial, insensitive
  - i.e., someone who likes to have the newest iPhone
- Carefree: other things in life are valued over money, money is not a priority
  - easygoing, flexible, immature, irresponsible
  - i.e., change does not intimidate this person, but they usually do not plan for financial emergencies
- Giving: feel good by giving to others
  - thoughtful, charitable, enabling, martyr
  - i.e., person may spend a lot of money on other people, which can create financial challenges for themselves
- Planning: money helps these people achieve their goals
  - responsible, accomplished, overconfident, boring
  - i.e., typically, elected officials have this trait

- Security: money makes these people feel safe and in control
  - thrifty, prepared, cheap, suspicious
  - i.e., person has an emergency fund, but also is the most willing to end a relationship due to finances
- Spontaneous – money helps them enjoy the moment
  - daring, open-minded, impulsive, unconcerned with consequences
  - i.e., person is strong socially and does look at their bank accounts, but feel powerless controlling it

Understanding behaviors and the categories that you and your partner may fall into can help with communications about money. He urged staff to utilize this activity as a tool to start having these conversations. Kevin asked if anyone wanted to share someone in their life that might resonate with one of these areas.

**Discussion:** Toya Jacobs, ex-officio member from the Office for Equity and Diversity, shared that she is a combination of status and spontaneous.

Kevin Sutton replied he falls into those categories, as well, and it is easy for people in these groups to overspend.

Kevin Sutton discussed creating annual, monthly, weekly, and daily budgets and stated the more you want to be involved with your finances, the more specific you will want your budget to be. A budget can involve one category, such as eating out, or multiple categories. He urged everyone to ask themselves, “Why am I spending money on this?” before making a purchase. The response may be that you are eating with friends to meet the physiological need of food as well as a social belonging need. Identifying the reason you are spending money is the most tailored way for you to save money. Ask yourself if you can meet the same need without the expense. Identify those needs and find other ways to meet them. For example, if you want to spend time with friends and family, you can do an activity together. Instead of removing your wants and only purchasing your needs, try to establish a balance. Think about changing the frequency, quality, and environment of an expense (i.e., going shopping when you are upset, going to the grocery store when you are hungry). A way to change your grocery shopping habits is to shop online. This changes your environment and reduces the urge to purchase items that are not on your list. You can change the quality of what you purchase by choosing three or four store brand items instead of the name brand. Different strategies will resonate depending on your needs and personality type.

Kevin Sutton presented an activity on how to plan for gift giving to reduce stress throughout the year at holidays, since gifts are a planned expense. He asked everyone to draw four columns on a sheet of paper. The names of the people you buy a gift for throughout the year were placed in the first column. The second column designated how many times a year a gift is purchased for that person. The third column shows the amount of money spent per gift, and the fourth column displayed the product of columns two and three, to provide the annual gift budget per person per year. He recommended using automated savings to transfer money into a savings account each month as a way to plan ahead for gift giving. This activity can also be used for other planned expenses, such as vacations.

Kevin also mentioned the importance of having a weekly check-in with yourself, partner, or family member to assess finances and plan your meals for the week. A weekly conversation normalizes talking about money, can reduce stressful conversations, and is helpful when setting shared goals. He recommended placing all banking and credit card apps in one folder on your phone and opening the apps each week. Paying off a credit card weekly helps you make regular payments, boosts your credit score, and ensures you are not carrying a balance each month.

In closing, Kevin Sutton shared a QR code that will allow employees to sign up for a one-on-one conversation with him. He can also be contacted by email at [suttonke23@ecu.edu](mailto:suttonke23@ecu.edu).

**Discussion:** Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, asked if he provides services on investing.

Kevin Sutton replied that his certification covers investing. He can provide an overview of investments, mutual funds, index funds, brokerage accounts. He does not give recommendations to any individual business or financial firm.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, asked if he provides information about bitcoins.

Kevin Sutton stated cryptocurrency is not part of his certification, so he does not provide advice on it.

Chair Dana Lopez, from Student Affairs, stated she has a staff member who is saving for a car and needs financial advice. She asked if a group of people from the same department could connect with him through a workshop or other venue.

Kevin Sutton answered he could provide a group presentation or tailor a presentation on the topic of buying a car. He can provide calculators and resources for estimating the monthly payment, as well as how to save towards a down payment before getting a loan.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, stated many staff have questions about resources related to retirement, and asked if he can provide assistance related to retirement planning.

Kevin Sutton replied he can meet with folks before they meet with HR, so they feel prepared before speaking with their retirement representative.

### **Student Government Association (SGA) Update**

Joshua Crockett, SGA Attorney General and Staff Senate Parliamentarian

ECU's SGA received a \$6,000 grant due to their work with Swipe Out Hunger. They will utilize this money to help with food insecurities for students on campus. Joshua Crockett and SGA President Javier Limon have met to discuss the renovations to Legacy Hall, Jones Hall, and off-campus housing sites. They will continue this work in the spring and hope to implement some sustainability initiatives. Senator Chad Carwein has been working with SGA Director Lauren Garcia on sustainability.

Other SGA initiatives include the funding of the Black Student Success Summit, working with the Calendar Committee to implement wellness days, and recruiting students to run for SGA in the upcoming elections. Anyone who wishes to connect with an SGA director from a specific committee can contact him directly. Joshua encouraged input and feedback to strengthen the shared governance across campus.

**Discussion:** Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, asked Joshua to speak more about the Crown Resolution that the SGA passed.

Joshua Crockett stated the Crown Act was passed by SGA and they recommended that the city of Greenville implement this resolution.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, included that Governor Cooper has stated that it is unlawful to discriminate based on an individual's hair, and that state employees are protected.

Joshua Crockett added he will send the SGA's resolution to Senator Powell.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, asked Joshua to explain SGA's discussion of the Labor Acknowledgement.

Joshua Crockett responded that he will be meeting with SGA Director George Cherry in January to make sure everything is properly formatted. If it passes the constitutionality test, the Labor Acknowledgement can return to the floor for discussion.

Secretary Shoopman, from Academic Affairs, referred to the wellness days advocated by SGA and asked if recommendations have been proposed to expand fall break.

Joshua Crockett replied he will obtain more information in February after the SGA meets with the Calendar Committee in January. It appears that days will be moved on the calendar to extend fall break.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Stephanie Stroud, Staff Senate Treasurer

Treasurer Stephanie Stroud reported on the Staff Senate's travel expenses from the UNC Staff Assembly meeting in October of 2023, along with expenditures for the Wellness Walk, and the Canva Pro license for the Communications and Marketing Committee. Funds from the Gail Jordan Memorial scholarships were also awarded. Staff Senate has been reimbursed for travel associated with the Chancellors' Cup Golf Tournament. Treasurer Stroud is still waiting on reimbursement from the July 2023 Staff Assembly meeting and has followed up several times regarding this matter. Most of the remainder of this year's budget will be spent on Staff Appreciation Month. Requests for funds may be sent to Treasurer Stroud directly or to [staffsenate@ecu.edu](mailto:staffsenate@ecu.edu).



## Committee Updates

### Executive Committee

#### UNC System Optional Retirement Program (ORP)

Chair Dana Lopez reiterated from the November Staff Senate meeting that Fidelity will no longer be a choice as part of the UNC System's Optional Retirement Program. Those invested in Fidelity will be moved over to TIAA. Chair Lopez met with Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resources Officer Kitty Wetherington to discuss these changes. A transition guide will be emailed in mid-January to those who are affected by this transition. Questions specific to your circumstances may be directed to the ECU Benefits Office at [retirement@ecu.edu](mailto:retirement@ecu.edu).

#### UNC Staff Assembly Bereavement Leave Resolution

The UNC System Staff Assembly voted on a bereavement leave resolution, which requests for paid leave specifically for family member bereavement. This document will be emailed to senators for review. The goal of this request is to align the paid leave programs for university EHRA non-faculty employees with the programs provided to SHRA employees under the State Human Resources Commission. It recommends that the following elements be included in a university bereavement policy:

- Up to five days of paid bereavement leave granted due to the death of an immediate family member, such as a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, step-parent, and domestic partner.
- Employees requesting paid bereavement leave must notify their supervisor as soon as possible.
- Bereavement leave is not accruable, is reallocated each calendar year, and cannot be paid out.
- Eligible employees may use other available paid leave for additional time off or take leave without pay with their supervisor's approval.

Questions regarding this resolution may be directed to Dana Lopez ([lopezda18@ecu.edu](mailto:lopezda18@ecu.edu)) or to the following senators who serve on the UNC System Staff Assembly who were in attendance during the meeting: Crystal Hildenbrand ([hildenbrandc@ecu.edu](mailto:hildenbrandc@ecu.edu)), Todd Inman ([inmanc@ecu.edu](mailto:inmanc@ecu.edu)), and Aisha Powell ([powellai@ecu.edu](mailto:powellai@ecu.edu)).

### By-Laws Committee

Senator John Southworth, Chair of the By-Laws Committee, reported that a recommendation was made to the Executive Committee to create an ex-officio position in the by-laws for an SGA ex-officio position after reviewing the feedback received from a survey regarding the inclusion of the SGA in the Staff Senate. This was voted as the most popular option and would be similar to the ex-officio position that exists in the Staff Senate's by-laws for a Faculty Senate ex-officio member.

A vote will take place concerning the incorporation of the new Dental Medicine Support Services (DMSS) staff classification into the Staff Senate by-laws.

The By-Laws Committee will continue to review the by-laws of other UNC System universities to see how those governing bodies may differ from ECU's Staff Senate.



**Communication and Marketing Committee**

Senator Chad Carwein, Chair of the Communication and Marketing Committee, announced the membership webpage has been updated with current members' information and photos. Due to challenges working with Creative Services and Logo Review, Jenny Gregory, who conducts communications and marketing for Campus Recreation and Wellness, provided a training session to the Communications and Marketing Committee to explain ECU's new branding guidelines. Their committee has received a request to create marketing materials for the Ballard's Annual Lessons in Leadership event which is scheduled for the spring. This flyer has been submitted to Creative Services for design. Senator Carwein stated that the marketing requests need to be submitted earlier in order to meet Creative Services' deadlines.

**Diversity Committee**

Senator Aisha Powell, Chair of the Diversity Committee, announced the speakers for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Leaders at ECU Panel, which will be held on March 28<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm at the Main Campus Student Center in room 253:

- Dr. LaNika Wright, Associate Vice Chancellor for Health and Well-Being
- Dr. Allison Danell, Dean of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Sharon Ballard, Chair of the Human Development and Family Science Department
- Jessica Doyle-Mekkes, Teaching Instructor and Program Coordinator for Musical Theatre

A Qualtrics link will be placed in Teams for senators to submit questions for the panelists. Senator Powell thanked the Communications and Marketing Committee for creating the save-the-date flyer for this event.

Other announcements included the Labor Acknowledgement, December observances, and welcoming a new member of the Diversity Committee. Senator Aisha Powell and Faculty Senator Dr. Rachel Roper attended the SGA meeting on November 1, 2023, to share the version of the Labor Acknowledgement passed by the Staff and Faculty Senate. Senator Powell shared the following December observances: Hanukkah ends on the evening of December 15<sup>th</sup>, Christmas is on December 25<sup>th</sup>, and Kwanza is celebrated from December 26 – January 1. Lastly, Senator Powell welcomed Maggie Bryant, from the Brody School of Medicine, who has joined Staff Senate and is serving on the Diversity Committee.

**Human Resources Committee**

Senator Jennifer Muir, Chair for the HR Committee, reported they received eight nominees for the Staff Emeritus awards. The nominees will be reviewed for eligibility and an update should be available at the January 2024 Staff Senate monthly meeting.

A community service event with Mr. Beast will be scheduled in March or April of 2024.

**Leadership and Professional Development Committee**

There were no updates from the Leadership and Professional Development Committee.

**Membership Committee**

Senator Joseph Moore, the Chair of the of the Membership Committee, stated nominations will be open for Staff Senate from January 2-17, 2024. He thanked the Communications and Marketing Committee for creating flyers that will be disseminated on Instagram, Facebook, and through email. The open alternate

seat in University Advancement has been filled; however, seats are still open in Athletics and in the Brody School of Medicine.

**Recognition and Rewards Committee**

There were no updates from the Recognition and Rewards Committee.

**Scholarship Committee**

There were no updates from the Scholarship Committee.

**Old Business**

Dana Lopez, Chair

**Retirement Recognitions**

The discussion on retirement recognitions and celebrations has moved to the HR Committee, and an update will be provided during the spring semester.

**Format of Future Meetings**

Chair Dana Lopez announced that it has been decided to continue to hold Staff Senate meetings in-person. Those who need to join online due to being a remote employee living outside of the Greenville area have been granted an exception. Senators who attend meetings remotely are not allowed to vote but can still serve on the senate and in committees. Chair Lopez is looking at ways to better include those who join the meetings remotely.

**New Business**

Dana Lopez, Chair

**Dental Medicine Support Services (DMSS) Classification Proposed Change**

Chair Dana Lopez called Senator John Southworth to the floor to present the proposed revisions to the by-laws regarding the new classification of Dental Medicine Support Services employees. Senator Southworth explained that the state legislature split the clinical staff classification into employees that will work in the health care realm and staff who work under the School of Dental Medicine. The By-Laws Committee suggested including the dental support staff so they can be represented in Staff Senate. A passed motion would allow the addition of DMSS to the other staff classifications mentioned in the by-laws (i.e., EHRA non-faculty, SHRA, and CSS employees). Senator Southworth also included grammatical changes, such as including acronyms, where applicable.

**Discussion:** Michelle Morris, from Human Resources, asked Senator Southworth to clarify that CSS stands for Clinical Support Services. The last “S” does not stand for “staff.”

Senator John Southworth thanked Michelle Morris for the correct terminology and stated that change will be made to ensure accuracy.

Senator Aisha Powell, from Academic Affairs, asked for a further explanation on the organizational structure of these employees.

Senator John Southworth replied that Dental Medicine still falls under Academic Affairs. The CSS employees that will remain in Academic Affairs are now deemed as DMSS employees. Clinical staff at the Brody School of Medicine are still referred to as CSS employees.

A voice vote was conducted. The motion carried with all in favor to add the DMSS designation to the Staff Senate by-laws.

In closing, Chair Dana Lopez announced the next Staff Senate meeting will be held on January 11, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. at the East Carolina Heart Institute (ECHI) Auditorium.

The meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Meeting minutes were taken and prepared by Staff Senate Secretary, Christiana Shoopman.

Minutes approved 1/11/2024