



## Staff Congress

**Draft Minutes for October 16, 2024  
Alexander Hall, Room 342, and Zoom**

**Present:** Dedrick Brooks, Tami Dandeneau, Duane Dycus, Jodi Hanneman, Gerry Harris, Orville Herndon, Joshua Hutson, B.J. Johnson, Trish Lofton, Jeremy McKeel, Amanda Mansfield, Kim Newbern, Tressa Ross, David Shelton, Mary Steely, Rachel Stewart, Kristen Swisher, Casey Workman

**Absent:** Dayna Hutchinson, Matthew Jones, Audrey Neal, Justin Thomas, Joshua Tillson, Lisa Willis

**Guests:** Courtney Hixon, Director, Human Resources; Camela Ramey

**CALL TO ORDER:** Staff Congress Vice President Jeremy McKeel called the meeting to order. Staff Congress President Audrey Neal was traveling for work.

### **REPORTS FROM SPECIAL GUESTS PRESENT:**

**Courtney Hixon, Director of Human Resources:** Courtney Hixon said open enrollment is scheduled for October 18 through November 1. The Employee Health and Benefits Fair is scheduled for October 23, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., in the Curris Center Ballroom. Medicare information sessions and flu immunizations will be available at the health fair.

**Staff Regent Report:** No report.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Joshua Hutson made a motion to approve the September 18, 2024 Meeting Minutes as presented. Tami Dandeneau seconded. Vice President McKeel called for the vote, and the motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT:** Joshua Hutson made a motion to approve the September 2024 Treasurer's Report as presented. Kristen Swisher seconded. Vice President McKeel called for the vote, and the motion carried.

### **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Executive Committee:** No report.

**Credentials and Elections Committee:** No report.

**Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee:** Tressa Ross said that the Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee discussed including extended campuses in events such as the staff holiday reception. Ms. Ross has emailed Sharion Meloan, Executive Coordinator in the Office of the Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services, to request the date for the holiday reception.

The Staff Recognition and Special Events Committee suggested changing the date and/or theme of the Children's Christmas party. Other community events are scheduled for the same day the party is usually scheduled. This resulted in low attendance at the Christmas party in 2023. In 2022, attendance was higher but attendees commented that the location (Alexander Hall atrium) was crowded and hot. The Curris Center Ballroom, which is large enough for the Children's Christmas Party, is reserved by another group a year in advance. Discussion followed and included possibly moving the event to a different time of the year, and changing the theme. Staff Congress members discussed including some questions on the Staff Survey to ask staff for input on the time of year staff would like the event to be scheduled. The group

consensus was to not schedule a Christmas party for 2024, while considering other options and other times of the year to schedule an event for employees and their children.

**Communications Committee:** No report.

**Working Conditions Committee:** No report.

**Staff Survey Committee:** Dedrick Brooks reported that at the September meeting of the Staff Survey Committee, committee members discussed possible revisions for the 2024-2025 Staff Survey. In lieu of a meeting in October, the committee members communicated via email. The next meeting will be scheduled for November.

Discussion followed. The consensus of Staff Congress members was to include in the Staff Survey a section of new questions about current concerns while continuing to include some repeated questions each year. Maintaining some of the same questions each year allows the Staff Survey results to indicate trends and changes in responses. Having some questions repeated in the survey each year also provides data that can be used to provide a review of the university president. In 2023, when the Board of Regents requested that Staff Congress provide a review of the university president, the Staff Congress executive officers were able to prepare a review using data from Staff Surveys. Staff Congress members also discussed including a section of questions for newly hired staff.

**Textbook Scholarship Committee:** Joshua Hutson reported that its October meeting, the Textbook Scholarship Committee selected the following textbook scholarship recipients from the applications received for the fall 2024 semester scholarship: Ladonna Roberts, who works in Information Systems, and Dixie Lynn, who works at WKMS. No applications were received for the professional development fund for the fall semester. The committee will meet in November to discuss raising funds for the textbook scholarship and professional development fund.

**Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee:** Trish Lofton reported that at the September meeting of the Personnel Policies and Benefits Committee, the committee members discussed and prioritized the committee's work for the 2024-2025 year. The committee plans to discuss the inclement weather work policy, tuition waivers, mental health support for staff, and sick leave time for newly hired staff. Comments received on the Staff Survey indicate staff concerns regarding the inclement weather work policy. Some staff said the taxes for tuition waivers used have been withheld from their pay. Newly hired staff who have not yet accumulated sick leave before they need to be absent from work due to their own illness or the illness of a family member must use unpaid leave.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee:** Amanda Mansfield said that based on feedback from Jordan Smith, Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs, and Camisha Duffy, Executive Director of IDEA and Title IX Coordinator, along with the committee members' input, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee has decided to retain the committee's name as is. Reasons for doing so include that the committee's name aligns with the committee's purpose and function. Jordan Smith said he would keep the committee informed of any legislation related to the purpose of the committee.

#### **UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITTEES:**

**Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee:** Orville Herndon said the Faculty and Staff Insurance and Benefits Committee will meet on November 1, at 8:15 a.m. The 2025 insurance information was sent to staff on October 16.

Projected information for 2026 insurance is expected to be available in August or September 2025. Mr. Herndon said staff may contact the committee with any feedback.

**Intercollegiate Athletic Council:** No report.

**Naming Campus Facilities Committee:** No report.

**Judicial Board:** No report.

**Sick Leave Appeals Committee:** No report.

**International Studies Advisory Committee:** No report.

**Budget Advisory Committee:** No report.

**Shared Governance Committee:** No report.

**Parking Advisory Committee:** No report.

**AD HOC COMMITTEES:**

**Business List Revision Committee:** No report.

**Staff Regent Bylaws Revision Committee:** No report.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:** Vice President McKeel said the next Staff Congress meeting will be held in Alexander Hall, room 342.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Trish Lofton made a motion to adjourn. Tressa Ross seconded, and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned.