



# STAFF SENATE

## ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

**Staff Senate Meeting**  
**May 17, 2024 10:00am**  
**McCandless Hall- Griffin Auditorium & Zoom**

**Present:** Pam Bridges (zoom) & in-person proxy, Carolyn Carthen, Diego Chulan, Kathryn Doaty, Kim Dunnavant, Donna Holland Beth Jenkins (zoom), Amber Martinez (PO), Elaine McGill, Whitney Michael (secretary), Valerie Sellers, Amber Skantz

**Absent:** Ben Dumas

1. **Order-** Meeting called to order by Amber Martinez. 10:01am.
2. **Minutes-** \*Update that Valerie Sellers had proxy by zoom. The minutes were accepted and approved. (Donna H., second Kim D.)
3. **Old Business**
  - a. Review of Staff Senators' duties and responsibilities-Amber M.
  - b. Bylaws Committee Update- Amber S.
  - c. Staff Development Committee- Whitney M.
  - d. Staff Senate Budget- Amber M.
  - e. Staff promotions/accomplishments to be recognized at Convocation
4. **New Business**
  - a. Committee Updates
    - i. Staff Development Committee-first one June 21<sup>st</sup> with Toni Carter presenting. Discussion on holding monthly staff senate meeting after professional development session or move to the next Friday.
      - Many staff will be pressed for time to attend the meeting after professional development meeting due to needing to get back to offices.
      - Vote called to move meeting to following Friday. 7/12 vote to move meeting to June 28<sup>th</sup>.
      - Dr. Wehlburg will provide refreshments for professional development sessions.
      - Whitney met with Lynn Frank and Belinda Krigel in regards to training sessions being organized for Excel, Box, etc.
      - Sessions will be planned and offered based on knowledge level.
      - Reminder any staff member can serve on Staff Senate committees, not just senators.
    - ii. Summer Olympics will be held in August.
      - Cornhole, typing, relays, etc.
      - Possible pickleball.
    - iii. Gym Committee
      - Two rooms for workout space: high impact and low impact.
      - Walking trail with more visibility and signage around campus.

- Outdoor bikes
  - Indoor walking track/space.
  - Old maintenance building for possible gym option.
- iv. Bylaws Committee review from Amber Skantz
- Met a few times with 4 or 5 goals
  - Rename/restructure Staff Senate Constitution to more closely match Faculty Senate's with more detailed out bylaws.
  - Create standing committees to be named in bylaws.
  - Change representation numbers/ratio.
  - Add in staff senate recognition and award: convocation presentation, John "Booty" Murray award verbiage will "live" in new bylaws document.
- b. Academic Calendar/Holiday Schedule
- i. New changes that include separate holiday schedule and no designated "cc" campus closure dates on calendar.
  - ii. Confusion on what this means now and moving forward. Anonymous questions read by Whitney Michael.
- c. Dr. Wehlburg Open Q & A Session
- i. Anonymous Q: Campus closed (cc) designation has been removed from the 2024-2025 University/Academic Calendar. When and why did this change take place?
    - The University and Academic calendar have not been separated. In the past, that was put together by the registrar's office where they included other items such as (cc), even though that was not always true with people, on the calendar. This year's calendar had errors because it was made based on previous years (one semester short, one semester longer, and others)-one calendar is registrar and one is HR. Push back from board members was heard about not liking the campus appearing as closed so much. We now have break times that align when we are open and in session. Our role as an institution is to support our students as we are moving into having more and more of our students online. We have to adapt to that. Over the last four years we have asked several of our staff to do work that needed to be done even though it was a reduced staff for that day. We have now tried to make it more clear by taking the HR days off and instead of calling it campus closed, we are calling it a break.
  - ii. Anonymous Q: Now that the Holiday Schedule and the Academic/University calendar do NOT include the phrase 'campus closed', how does faculty, staff, students, and the general public know that the campus is closed during those times or are we open for business and at what level?
    - Will have to go look and see what it says on the student side. As an institution, it would not be in our best interest to be completely closed. What we have done in the past was to communicate with the staff who were expected to work in that time. The more we can use our campus and be able to show what we do, the better. There

may be instances where you are asked to come in for work. There is no attempt here to take days away. Example: Library where not all staff came in at the same time; if we were to have additional events, we would do the same type of thing. We do have more events happening on campus (i.e., Launchbox). Our goal is to do this fairly and equitably-the idea that we would mandate people behind the scenes or behind their back is not something we would do.

- iii. Anonymous Q3: Why doesn't the University observe all of the state and federal holidays? Is there potential for having state/federal holidays (i.e., Presidents, Columbus, Veterans) returned/given to staff as holidays?
- No intent to take days away; days off works by looking at where January 1 and December 25 falls. Days off are outlined in the portal. Federal holidays and official state holidays-read through the list of state holidays-we will not be looking at all of those days. We have an additional 11 days off between semesters rather than going by the state holidays.
- iv. Anonymous Q4: According to the academic calendar and class scheduling policy, academic calendars should be established at least 5 years in advance. Where can staff, faculty, and students go to view the next 5 years of calendars?
- Registrar puts together a 5-year draft calendar. They are not publicly shared, because they are draft form. Spring Break examples-harder to align with Spring Breaks in the area, ACA (calendar varies from Calhoun), we use this to help us find problems in advance.
- v. Gabrielle Whitney Q: No change in the way we schedule things- fall semester starting a full week later than normal-faculty are impacted by that but staff are not since we work during that break. 19-24 previous year and 19-23 previous to that.
- Not the count that I came up with; part of when the semester starts is dependent on Christmas; per policy we have to have a certain number of weeks per semester. Look at the whole year, because if Christmas is early, it pushes more things down the road, when you look at a piece of it, you're not looking at the whole time. There is no contractual agreement saying we will have a certain amount of time for Christmas, etc. Going back a few years when the calendar was done, the calendar roll did not always follow our rules. Saying we always get 3 weeks off is not always a rule. The way we are doing this is based off policy and contract to be accurate and transparent. The reason for the error was that the calendar for the previous year had just been rolled forward, also Thanksgiving break falls late where exams would have fallen.
- vi. Amber Skantz Q: We pulled calendars back to 2018-the biggest discrepancy in addition to the closed campus status, they included our holiday break through Thursday, which extended our holiday through a weekend. Instead of coming back the Monday, we are coming back 3-4 days early, for some staff, because we are expected to work on Saturday/Sunday. When did this happen and as staff, we are not the public, is there any way as staff we can view these (calendars) ahead of time?

- In the HR portal is where you can see the calendar. Some of the reason it did not go out earlier is because we were having to go back and check. We encourage employees to use the portal more. In the future, we will work to get that out earlier.
  - I am here to support you, because you support our students.
- vii. Anonymous Q: Throughout the last few years, the faculty expectation for on campus visibility and accessibility has continued to decline to the point that there are no longer on campus office hours. At what point did this requirement change and what is the justification for it? If we (as staff) support the same students with the same working hours, the same schedule commitments, and home life, as well as faculty who are working from remote locations, why are staff held to a difference standard about on-campus needs?
- Staff don't have same working hours as faculty; classes, scholarship, etc.-for most of our staff, we get here at 8 and leave at 4:30. Faculty office hours-it used to be that the only way you could get in touch with a faculty member was to come to campus to their office, but most of our students begin virtual, there is no longer the need to hold those 8-5 hours. Where the office hours happen is less important. The requirement that office hours happen on campus has changed. We want to see people on campus-minimum of 10 hours on campus in Fall-Spring. Random collisions of brilliance-meet up with someone in hallways, etc.-we are trying to build a culture and community where things can happen. Due to our involvement in the community, we will never be all on campus. Some of this is changing but there are some things that are not changing. I don't see us going to an all-remote campus.
- viii. Part 2 Anonymous Q: There is a problem with low staff morale-stress and added work load added to staff members.
- Not sure what that means, but I would love to hear more about it. If someone is having to work additional hours, we need to know that so please let us know. I don't know of the specifics; if that is happening, please go to HR or the Dean. One goal is for everyone to love going to work. Do we have a systemic problem or are we just not a good fit and what can we do? We want you to like coming to work and we are trying to do that with events and other things throughout your day. If this is happening to you, please let someone know about it.

## 5. Concerns/Announcements

- i. No further concerns or announcements were brought forward.
- ii. Motion to adjourn from Kim D. and second from Carolyn C.

**Meeting Adjourned-** Meeting adjourned. Minutes recorded by Whitney Michael.