



The University of Texas at Austin
Staff Council

2019-2020 Report to the President

Presented and approved June 1, 2020 by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council.

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Executive Overview

UT Staff Council (Staff Council or UTSC) is a volunteer organization comprised of elected Representatives from across the university. Through advisory recommendations to UT leadership, UTSC serves as a forum for the interests, concerns, and issues affecting staff members. These efforts are supported and implemented by the work of UTSC's committees and executive leadership.

Reports describing the efforts of UTSC committees follow this Executive Overview. Some highlights include coordination with UT Parking and Transportation Services on the permit waitlist for parking garages, collaboration with UT Human Resources to increase the capacity and diversity of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselors, administering the UTSC professional development grant, and organizing a cleanup of Waller Creek.

In addition to the important and valuable efforts of its committees during this term, Staff Council worked on special projects as they arose, broadened relationships with key stakeholders, and served as a voice for staff members related to various UT initiatives.

Staff Council Representatives participated in a professional development book club that provided the opportunity to learn leadership qualities and engage in group discussions. For this year's book club, Representatives chose Dr. Brené Brown's *Dare to Lead*, a choice that was made prior to the announcement of Dr. Brown joining UT as a visiting professor. Staff Council is excited to see the benefits to the university community gained from the skills and tools provided in *Dare to Lead*.

During this term, Staff Council and UT's Faculty Council recognized the benefits from developing a collaborative relationship between the two organizations, and as a result worked closely throughout the term to maintain open communications and sought opportunities for shared advocacy on behalf of the broader university community. In addition to cultivating this new organizational alliance, Staff Council Chair Sandra Catlett served on several university committees: the Misconduct Working Group, which was formed to better address Title IX and misconduct issues at UT in response to concerns expressed by students; the Council for Texas Impact, created to identify key areas where UT can have the most impact in the coming decade; and the Task Force for Developing Community Standards for Faculty, which was developed to define aspirational guidelines for community standards for UT faculty members and their interactions and relationships with the broader university community. Staff Council Representatives and the UTSC Program Coordinator, Elizabeth Schaub, served on General Faculty Standing Committees. Staff Council representation in these initiatives is key to ensuring that the concerns and needs of staff members are considered as the university examines policies and processes that impact the entire university community.

This term saw the continuation of the successful Staff Lunch with the President program. These lunches provide opportunities for UT staff members to share their ideas and perspectives with

the president in a casual setting. Lunch topics included “Civility and Responsible Behavior in the Workplace” and the “Honor Texas” initiative.

With the current COVID-19 pandemic impacting the entire world, UT and Staff Council are ending this term in an unsettled and dynamic state. UTSC will continue its work in the coming months and years, primarily focusing on serving as a voice for staff members as the university makes plans for addressing the priorities of education, research, and public service while ensuring the safety and health of all UT staff and faculty members and students.

In addition to the impacts from COVID-19, the university is undergoing significant changes in its executive leadership. Staff Council looks forward to developing new and strong relationships with Interim President Jay Hartzell and Interim Provost Dan Jaffe. These valuable relationships, along with those with other key members of UT’s upper administration, provide the platform through which Staff Council can ensure that UT staff members will always have a seat at the table.

Benefits Committee

Committee members: Mirna Benhamou, Miranda Cameron-Price, Greg Caponigro, Jennifer Cassaday, Stephanie Cook-O'Neal, Tino Garza, Jennifer Horsak, Jacqueline King, Elizabeth Korves (co-chair), Jeff Mayo, Tiffani Nguyen, Jason O'Sail, Michael Phalan, Maria Ruffino, Ann Sellers, Eric Wilson (co-chair), Eric Zilligen

Introduction

The committee examined the Staff Tuition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Staff Education Benefit) and compared it to similar benefits at other UT System institutions. Additionally, the committee made recommendations to the university's Parking and Transportation Services regarding the parking permit waitlist process.

Summary

Staff Tuition Assistance Program

The Staff Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) allows staff members to improve themselves and enhances how we serve others within and outside of the university. One key difference between UT Austin's STAP and tuition assistance programs at some institutions within the UT System involves the ability of staff members to take courses outside of their home institution. This is generally due to the lack of availability of relevant courses to their staff members. Though UT Austin has a wide variety of courses available, it employs an even broader range of employees. Expanding STAP to allow for eligible staff members to take courses outside of in-person UT Austin courses would help a wider range of employees improve themselves and the work they perform. The committee will continue to collaborate with Human Resources to identify ways in which the STAP can be more widely used by UT staff members.

Revision to Use and Allocation of Parental Leave

In prior years, married employees of UT were required to share FMLA (the unpaid leave provided by the Family and Medical Leave Act) when taking time off for bonding with a newborn or for a recent adoption or foster care placement. Staff Council worked with UT Human Resources to end this practice this year, so that going forward each employee may take their full FMLA allocation. Effective August 1, 2019, this employee-friendly practice is now standard at UT for all married employees.

Parking Permit Waitlist Recommendation

The parking permit waitlist is currently prioritized based on job title and salary. Staff Council has proposed changing the classified/hourly portion of the waitlist to a first-come, first-served prioritization, as this would be more equitable to the lowest paid workers on campus who, under the current prioritization scheme, advance more slowly to the top of the waitlist. After working collaboratively with Bobby Stone, Director of Parking and Transportation Services (PTS), the proposal has been formally submitted for PTS review and consideration.

Communications Committee

Committee members: Jason Barborka, Larrimie Gordon, Jennifer Horsak, Mark LaForest, Anali Mena, Marc Speir (chair)

Introduction

The committee led a rebranding initiative for Staff Council using and implementing brand guidelines that are aligned with the university's rules in collaboration with representative Andrew Mendoza, Art Director for UHS and CMHC. The committee created promotional communication materials for print, a promotional video, and updated promotional digital signage for distribution on monitors across campus.

Summary

Staff Council Rebranding

The committee executed a complete rebranding of Staff Council, including a new logo, social media buttons, letterhead, nametag and PowerPoint deck. Additionally, a brand book was created to provide guidance to designers and other communication professionals working on Staff Council materials. These materials will contribute to the new look of Staff Council beginning with the 2020-2021 term.

Promotional Print Materials

The committee created and distributed print materials, including a meeting reminder card and a "What's on your mind?" card. These were distributed to Staff Council representatives for posting in or near their offices.

Promotional Digital Materials

The committee created a promotional video, which has been embedded on the Staff Council home page and uploaded to YouTube. The committee also created new digital signage for distribution on monitors across campus for informative and recruitment purposes.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Committee members: Amy Armstrong, Ariel Brown, Adriana Cásarez, Donna Daugherty, Glenn Dembowski (co-chair), Rainbow Di Benedetto, Shaleiah Fox, Larrimie Gordon, Phoebe Green, Courtney Harris, Liliana Martinez, Crystal McCallon (co-chair), Anali Mena, Courtney Morshed, Tiffani Nguyen, Sylvester Ruffin

Introduction

The committee strives to promote a welcoming and inclusive campus climate and to provide all staff members with a voice and the opportunity to be heard. Diverse workplaces increase innovation, retention, and productivity. A diverse and inclusive culture at The University of Texas at Austin will help make our entire campus stronger and better equipped to support and propel the academic mission of the university. The committee is committed to outreach on behalf of Staff Council in ways that will create a balanced representation of the university's workforce in Staff Council elected representatives.

Summary

Building Relationships Across Campus

The committee continues to strengthen ties in the university community, seeking to connect with and engage university groups and individuals who are already working on diversity and inclusion initiatives. Committee members have joined University Resource Groups (URGs) and regularly attend meetings to strengthen relationships and support initiatives across campus.

Staff Council Diversity and Inclusion Mixer

In coordination with the URGs, the committee hosted the second annual Staff Council Diversity and Inclusion Mixer on March 11, 2020. The goals of this event were to strengthen connections between the URGs and Staff Council, encourage connections and identify experts and resources for addressing issues brought to the committee, as well as affirming the committee as a resource for the D&I needs of the university more broadly. Members of each URG were invited to participate in a panel discussion that was facilitated by Dr. Darren Kelly, Deputy to the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement. Attendance at this event increased from 60 attendees in 2019 to 130 attendees this year.

Service on Employee Assistance Program Search Committee

The committee followed up on work from the 2018-2019 term during which it authored a resolution—in collaboration with campus stakeholder Susan Harnden, Director of HealthPoint—calling for financial assistance for the university's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to increase the number of counselors that serve the university's diverse population. The resolution was passed by Staff Council during its May 2019 General Meeting and used by AVP for Human Resources Adrienne Howarth-Moore to help build a case for redirecting resources to support the hiring of additional EAP staff counselors. At the request of Susan Harnden, members of the committee served on the search committee for these counselor positions.

Health and Wellness Committee

Committee members: Ronald Bell, Karen Bowling, Beth Busse (chair), Yvette Cañedo, Rhonda Cox, Maureen Kelly, Priscilla Kinkle, Robert Lazare, Carrie McDonald, Nikki Seaton, Amber Shah

Introduction

The committee focused primarily on two initiatives.

1. Developing relationships and representation across campus; and
2. Advocating for the implementation of Annual Wellness Leave, which is eight hours of leave per year for eligible employees as provisioned in Texas Government Code 664.061 (Chapter 664. State Employees Health Fitness and Education, Section 664.061 Agency Wellness Policies)

Summary

Building Relationships Across Campus

The committee focused on strengthening and building new relationships with the following individuals and offices at the university:

- Rhonda Cox, Senior Assistant Director for Member and Guest Services in the Division of Recreational Sports
- Claire Hahn, Manager of Wellness Programs at The University of Texas System
- Adrienne Howarth-Moore, Associate Vice President for Human Resources
- Nosse Oviemhada, Work Life Balance and Wellness Manager in Human Resources
- Brittany O'Malley, Assistant Director for Prevention and Wellness in University Health Services and the Counseling and Mental Health Center, and Chair of the Wellness Network

Annual Wellness Leave

The committee also focused on continuing to advocate for the implementation of the “State Employees Health Fitness and Education Act of 1983, Section 664.061.” The committee was particularly interested in Annual Wellness Leave [Sec. 664.061 (3A and 3B)], which grants eight hours of leave per year for any employee who: a) receives a physical examination from their healthcare provider, and b) completes an online health risk assessment (HRA). Implementation of Annual Wellness Leave would enable staff members to seek wellness opportunities and affirm the university’s commitment to its employees’ wellness.

Issues and Research Committee

Committee members: Laine Blazeovich, Jessica Bradford, Susan Buckenmeyer, Yvette Cañedo, Christie Hodge (chair), Natalie Hill, Todd Lawrence, Jeff Mayo, Christopher Newman, Thomas Pearce, Meera Rajagopalan, Chris Stella

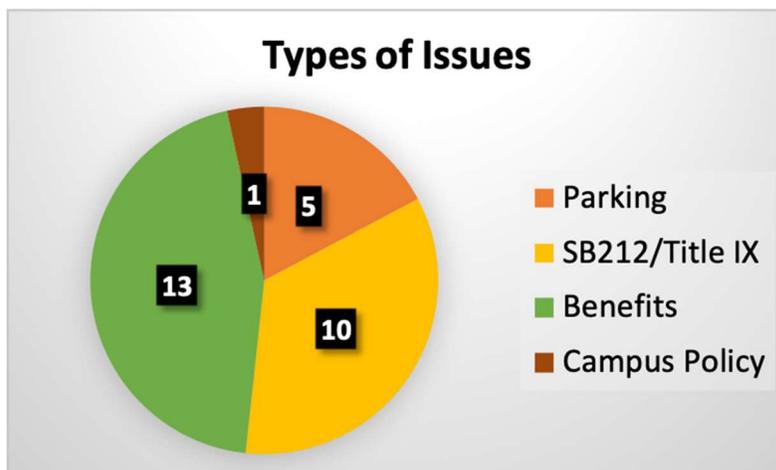
Introduction

It is vital for Staff Council to serve as a conduit for staff members to express concerns about campus-wide issues that they experience. This committee serves as the specific group that collects and records issues that the university's staff members bring to Staff Council to consider.

Summary

Analysis of Issues

The committee fielded 29* issues submitted between May 2019 and March 13, 2020. Of those 29, 23 are closed, which indicates the committee was able to address the issue, or deemed it beyond Staff Council's reach.



Within the Benefits category of issues received, the two most common were the Staff Tuition Assistance Program and paid leave. There were a wide variety of other benefits-related issues submitted to the committee.

**Note that this data was accurate as of March 12, 2020. Since March 13, 2020 when the university began responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee has received 67 issues. The increase in volume is notable.*

Streamlining Issues Process

The committee streamlined the process of receiving and responding to issues. A flow chart (see Appendix III) documenting the process is available on the Staff Council website to increase transparency around how issues are handled.

Research and Issues Subcommittee on COVID-19 (RISC)

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, to ensure that specific concerns about COVID-19 and the university's response are quickly addressed, the Research and Issues Subcommittee on COVID-19 was created. This group will continue to receive issues through the same avenues described above, but concerns about COVID-19 will be shared with the Staff Council Executive Committee, as well as university leadership, as the first priority.

Operations Committee

Committee members: Mark Blankenship, Casey Butler, Sandra Catlett, Stacie Cooks, Rhonda Cox, Rainbow Di Benedetto, Courtney Glynn, Larrimie Gordon (chair), Mark LaForest, Susanne Morrison, Courtney Morshed, Michael Nugent, Thomas Pearce, Amber Shah, Eric Zilligen

Introduction

The committee identifies and contributes to continuously improving Staff Council’s internal operations. The committee created resources for improving the onboarding experience for Staff Council representatives.

Summary

Onboarding New Representatives

The committee worked on refining a “Quick Starter Guide for Reps”—developed by former Staff Council Chair Jaime Davis—to ensure that newly-elected representatives feel prepared to take on their new roles. This guide will be distributed to all representatives following the 2020 election cycle.

Operations (general)

The committee provided guidance to the Staff Council Program Coordinator and Parliamentarian for streamlining Staff Council processes and documentation, piloted and tested a Staff Council Team in Microsoft Teams, assisted in the Communications Committee’s rebranding project, and provided input on equipping and empowering representatives.

Professional Development Committee

Committee members: Casey Butler (co-chair), Sean Cartell, Meredith Cox, Courtney Glynn, Larrimie Gordon, Jacqueline King, Robert Lazare, Tiffani Nguyen, Jason O'Sail, Andrew Mendoza, April Rogers (co-chair), Sylvester Ruffin, Maria Ruffino, Ashley Toscano

Introduction

The committee identifies, promotes, and proposes professional development solutions for all Staff Council constituents, as well as connects constituents to resources and opportunities for professional development.

Summary

Professional Development Grant Program

The committee primarily focused on evaluating and implementing the recently restructured Staff Council Professional Development Grant Program. Staff members have a strong need and desire to participate in professional development activities and the committee encourages continued financial support for this grant program from the university. The committee also hopes that efforts will grow within CSUs to help fund the professional development of their teams. The results of the fall 2019 grant cycle are as follows:

- 100 applicants, of which 86 met eligibility criteria
- Total amount of funds requested: \$108,777
- Total amount of funds awarded to 14 grantees: \$15,243
- Most requested professional development categories: business, grant writing, human resources, mental health, project management, and software
- University entities offering the most requested opportunities:
 - Center for Professional Education
 - Human Dimensions of Organizations

Grant Awardee Feedback Survey

The committee refined and finalized a feedback survey to be distributed to all awardees since the inception of the grant program in 2016. The survey will gather data about the value of the awardees' funded activities and includes questions focused on how the application process might be improved in the future. Using the survey results, the committee will provide further clarification on how grant applicants should distinguish between professional development and training activities, and will provide increased transparency in the grant application review process.

Sustainability Committee

Committee members: Beth Busse, Glenn Dembowski, Larrimie Gordon, John Lee, Elizabeth Miller, William O’Leary (chair), Kristin Phillips, Chris Stella, Neelesh Tekal, Kenneth Zieger

Introduction

The committee raised awareness about sustainability issues through tabling events during Campus Sustainability Week, organized and led a hike for staff members, hosted a Waller Creek Cleanup event, and partnered with the Office of Sustainability to support the annual Sustainability Luncheon.

Summary

Tabling Events

The committee hosted an information table during Sustainability Week, where committee members engaged with many university community members about ways to increase sustainability efforts on campus.

Staff Trip

In partnership with UT RecSports, the committee coordinated a day trip to the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment. Participants hiked on the preserve, toured the interpretive center, had a picnic lunch, took a glass bottom boat ride and toured the wetlands boardwalk.

Waller Creek Cleanup

On January 24, approximately 13 Staff Council representatives and staff members from across campus met up with undergraduate student Lauren McKinney—who has taken the lead in organizing Waller Creek clean-up efforts—to remove trash from a stretch of Waller Creek adjacent to Caven-Clark Field. As a result, 142 pounds of trash and recycling were removed from the banks of the creek. The event was such a success that a second cleanup in collaboration with the committee has been scheduled for later this year. This second cleanup will happen after staff members are able to safely return to campus. These successful efforts show that inroads have been made to get staff members motivated to support sustainability efforts on campus.

Sustainability Luncheon

Staff Council contributed \$1,000 to this year’s Sustainability Luncheon, which typically draws a crowd of 150-200 participants from across campus. Dr. Ted Gordon, Vice Provost for Diversity, had been scheduled to speak regarding “The Racial Geography of the University of Texas.” Dr. Gordon has agreed to speak at next year’s luncheon, and Staff Council directed the Office of Sustainability to keep the financial contribution to support next year’s luncheon as this year’s luncheon was cancelled due to COVID-19.

Appendix I: Promotional Materials



**I'm your UT Staff Council
Representative**

What's on your mind?

 The University of Texas at Austin
Staff Council

UT Staff Council supports a variety of activities and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life and effectiveness of the university's dedicated and valued staff members.



**All are Welcome at UT Staff
Council Monthly Meetings**

**3rd Thursday
of Each Month**

POB 2.302, 2-3:30pm

STAFFCOUNCIL.UTEXAS.EDU

 The University of Texas at Austin
Staff Council

UT Staff Council supports a variety of activities and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life and effectiveness of the university's dedicated and valued staff members.

Appendix II: Rebranding Graphics



Appendix III: Issues Process Flowchart

Issues Process

