



Staff Senate Meeting

March 27th, 2025 – 2:00-3:00pm

Zoom

Moderator: Keshia Giboney

Representatives Present: Kyle Smith, Ashley Woods, Brenda Coleman, Elaine Robinson, Cynthia Tooley, David Meyer, Dewana Oliver, Jay Sawe, Jessica Ross, Kristi Forman, McKenzie Scofield, Michelle Bollenbach, Patti Smith, Shannon Brown, Sherry Henson, Yin Su, Charles Hicks, Nick Ayers, Keshia Giboney, Peggy Reisser, Peter Hunter, Mercedes Tolbert, Janna Hays

Representatives Absent (excused): Ramona Jackson, Debbie Long, Shenicia Richardson

Representatives Absent (unexcused): Katora Jones, Shanta Hayes, Terri Fought

Guests: Vikki Massey, Peter Buckley, Raaj Kurapati

Minutes Secretary: Kyle Smith

Meeting Agenda and Minutes

- 2:00 pm** **Welcome and Review of Last Month's Minutes**
- 2:05 pm** **Vikki Massey Provides Details about AI Policy Draft**
- 2:20 pm** **Campus Updates and General Questions**
- 2:40 pm** **Dr. Buckley and Raaj Kurapati Speak on Executive Searches**
- 2:45 pm** **Follow up questions**
- 2:58 pm** **Closing Remarks and Meeting Adjourned**

Keshia Giboney began the meeting. Attendance was documented via a sign in sheet/checking attendees via Zoom.

Welcome and Review of Last Month's Minutes

Keshia began with a review of the topics discussed in the last meeting using the meeting minutes.

Vikki Massey Provides Details about AI Policy Draft

Vikki Massey began the topic by speaking to its current nature. The first draft covers a broad range of ideas and topics currently. As AI becomes implemented and tested more, specificity will come in time. The draft was created via a committee of members.

Vikki then went into the AI tools we have available to us: UTVerse and Microsoft Copilot. Each are generative AI models that are protected behind our login with the NetID and Password. These are great options for using AI tools to get drafts, answers, etc. without releasing it to an open source website such as ChatGPT. However, it is still advisable to take precautions and avoid putting sensitive HIPAA data within these resources. UTVerse is developed in house at UTK, where as copilot comes from our licensure with Microsoft.

Some use cases for these generative AI tools are summarizing documents, writing emails, writing outlines, etc. At this point McKenzie Scofield chimed in from a communication standpoint to make sure you do not just copy and paste the response into the email and send it. Make sure you edit it to still sound like yourself and make a personal touch. Peggy Reiser agreed that some AI generated response can come across as more blunt than intended. Vikki reemphasized that it is not a replacement for your own personal response, but a tool, not the final product.

You can also give the generative AI a "persona" i.e. Have it write to different audiences such as a 2nd Year grad student vs a 10th grade student. The tone and terminology used may come across as vastly different.

A question was asked if there is a need to cite AI in papers, documentation, etc. To which Vikki emphasized that the standards should be set at the professor's level. But, an important reminder is that again it is the tool and not the final product, using AI to enhance research is not cheating, when used properly. Often time, these AI prompts will provide websites in which it pulls the data from which can be cited as well.

Other ways to use the generative AI include:

- Asking it to put together a strategic plan for an office or a team
- Asking it to condense a document or paragraph down
- Prepare for meetings or evaluations with a manager.

Campus Updates and General Questions

To start out campus updates, it was brought to the attention that a new Dean of Medicine should begin in the first few weeks of July.

College of Health Professions announced a new interim dean Ashley Harkrider as Dr. Stephen Always returns back to the field to continue research.

Questions were asked about the status of Volshare, Kyle Smith from IT indicated that SharePoint is the official document storage solution going forward, but that there was some clarity needed on migrating data over from Volshare to Sharepoint that he would seek out answers for.

A question was also asked regarding the status of the Presidents Award in which Kristi Foreman shared a link within the chat.

Someone asked if there was any updates on the cost of living increase, nothing fully official has been released to general understanding, but 2.5% is a number that has been heard.

Questions about the status of Ad Hoc committees was asked, and Keshia Giboney responded stating the focus is on required committees that have not been formed yet. Ad-Hoc will come once the required is settled.

Peggy Reiser asked about starting some sort of event for recognition, but at this time no budget has been approved to be able to move forward.

The Communications team is working on an employee hub, similar to what exists at UTK currently.

Dr. Buckley and Raaj Kurapati Speak on Executive Searches

Dr. Buckley begin speaking after joining the meeting around 2:40 with Raaj Kurapati alongside him. Dr. Buckley spoke about the orientation and planning for Dr. Hocker as about to begin and expressed his excitement for what Dr. Hocker will be able to bring to the Leadership team.

He continued and touched on the transition of Dr. Always back to research, describing the work that he will be able to perform as extremely important. Emphasizing the great work that Dr. Always has performed as the Dean of the College of Health Professions and how his tenure in that role had far outlasted many others in similar roles.

At this point, Raaj Kurapati chimes in, discussing that the Institution Wide Town Hall and Finance and Operations Town Hall meetings had occurred within the last few weeks. The focus of the Town Hall meetings revolved around issues regarding DASH implementation. System Wide leadership met and heard first hand some of the growing pains UTHSC has been experiencing since its implementation. He expressed the generousness of their time to come down and hear about this issues first hand. Raaj at this time believes the conversations were positive and productive, leading to a renewed effort in terms of addressing key issues in the implementation. He stressed the importance that some

issues may need more intense thinking to find an appropriate solution and asks for patience as they work through it.

Follow up questions

At this point Dr. Buckley opened the floor to any questions or concerns. Elaine Robinson asked if Dr. Buckley believed with the recent changes at the Government level for DEI would impact the Black Student Association here on campus. Dr. Buckley expressed that it would be hard to see the BSA not impacted by the changes. He went on to state that if you roll back the clock to about a year ago, the organization would stand out for positive reasons, and one the University would be proud of. He continued stating that the environment has shifted and there are complexities relating to the topic. One of the issues is financial, and an issue around “preferentially” supporting one group over another. He emphasizes that UTHSC’s stance doesn’t necessarily agree with the law...but as a state institution it is their duty to abide by the law however it may be presented. Dr. Buckley states that ultimately their job is to be as transparent as possible, and that there is an important principal that even if we find we must make changes, we should not do it with derogatory languages. Emphasizing that its not that what was done was wrong ethically, but that the university must follow the morays of the moment.

Patti Smith asks Raaj Kurapati about DASH. The encumbrance of salaries is an issue and doesn’t want to focus on the past...but does want to note that on Nov 11th OSP had a training session for Grants and learned DASH will not encumber that need. Utilizing Excel as the current resource shocked those effected, and left those impacted feeling as though it was unworkable and scary. She would like to know what we have in place to address it sooner.

Raaj Kurapati responds stating, that was a part of the conversation that took place the morning of this meeting (March 27th). What his understanding is, is that they are working for a workaround for this issue. Unfortunately, at the time utilizing Excel is the immediate manual solution, but they are moving towards having a report automatically generated within DASH.

Raaj states: He is forming a group to discuss the direction it should go. We are expending grants daily. We can’t wait to see what the solution is. We need to make sure we are accurately tracking expenditures.

Closing Remarks and Meeting Adjourned

A question was presented about Admin Appreciation as some were questioning not receiving emails. An email was sent out by Chandra Alson, if you did not get an email your title would not apply. It is going to be held at Rock n Dough on April 23rd. Mckenzie Scofield would provide more information.

Peggy Reiser stated she wrote an article about the deconstruction of the building across from the Plaza. Estimated completion date of February 2026.

Keshia adjourned the meeting.