

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
STAFF SENATE MEETING**

Tuesday, March 11, 2023  
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.  
Close-Hipp Building, Lumpkin Auditorium, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor

PRESIDING: Rushondra James, President

***Call to Order – Rushondra James, President***

President James officially called the meeting to order at 3:57 PM after remarks from President Amiridis. President James welcomed staff senators and visitors to the staff senate meeting.

***Roll Call/Attendance Report - Katherine Hilson, Secretary***

Secretary Hilson checked the roll after taking attendance. According to the attendance report, 34 senators were in attendance, 13 senators were absent, no senators gave proxies, and 5 senators were virtual.

***Establish Quorum – Tyson Lusk on behalf of Parliamentarian Bo Hart***

Based on the attendance report, Secretary Hilson declared a quorum was established and EVP Lusk declared business could be conducted.

***Approval of Minutes – Rushondra James, President***

There were no changes to the March 14, 2023, staff senate meeting minutes. Senator Colascione made a motion to accept the March 14, 2023, general body staff senate minutes as written. Senator Epps seconded the motion to accept the minutes as written. All senators were in favor. The motion was adopted and carried, and the minutes were accepted as written.

***Reports of Officers:***

***Dr. Michael Amiridis, President, University of South Carolina***

Comments on staff -

Students are supported by the staff, both inside of the classroom and outside of it. At the same time, you support the faculty, from administrative functions to working with students. And of course, you support visitors. You interact with visitors; you communicate with visitors. In many cases you are the first, or, maybe, the only interaction they have. You represent the University. On the way out of graduation, they will see staff members. They will not see faculty. You communicate, you protect the community, and you beautify the community. Up until very recently, you were the most stable. Students and faculty transition much faster than staff members. But we've seen a trend that is now becoming disturbing and concerning. I want to thank you for what you do because without you, nothing would happen.

I need your help:

1. Turnover in Staff

18% staff last year. If you lose 1/6 or 1/5 of your workforce in a year and you must replace it, you're not doing anything else. It's very difficult to keep going in terms of other functions when you must rehire and train 1/6 staff members. This is not unique to

USC. I know that there are financial issues, but I also know that there are usually other factors as well. I have seen in the past that faculty and staff are not so worried about financial situations, if the environment is right, and opportunities are there to advance. Is it only the financial reasons that we see the turnover at USC? Or are there issues related to the work environment? Or are the issues related to lack of opportunities?

2. Help us imagine a better university.

I want to have more effective systems. I want them to be easier to navigate. They are difficult, right now, from many different perspectives. What can we do to make it easier to navigate? What can we do to make our systems faster in delivering results? I have already had some discussions to try to create a one-stop office. You can go there, and they can answer all the questions, not send you to another one that will send you to another one and then at the end you will end up where you started. I have seen this in other state agencies where they create an office that you can go to and do everything that you need. We will try to establish something like this for students. But students are only one part of the equation. What can we do for ourselves? Help us identify the obstacles, the obstacles that sometimes we impose on ourselves. Help identify the opportunities that we have. You know that we have put together a unit to do that. Help all of us to respect our time. Because at the end, we're wasting time. At the end, we are a university because of the students. We are going to be entering a period in the next couple of years where the competition for students will become ferocious among universities because many of them will face existential questions about whether they are able to keep their doors open or not. Big publics, like us, will become bigger, while the small ones are shrinking. We are more than 10% up this year. In another 2 or 3 years, when the number of high school graduate's decreases, we will become even more competitive. Looking at the students, what can we do to improve their experience and success. You, on staff senate, are serving the students as much as the faculty are serving the students. You see what the faculty and administration do not see, especially you in student affairs. I am asking for help. How can we better retain staff members? How can we be a more user-friendly university? What can we do to be even more attractive to students?

Questions about Imagine Carolina:

HR is providing an extensive report that will be ready in the coming weeks regarding Imagine Carolina. After this, we will see what the key issues are that we need to address. Are we going to do this every year? I do not know. Is the frequency of every year enough? I think we need two years to see what progress we make. But I am open to suggestions on this one.

Employment and Human Resources:

Are there any plans to revamp the EPMS system?

VP Agardy – We have started working on that. We're going to have focus groups on that and get your input. Imagine Carolina was incredible, and it was a great start.

We are starting to schedule the Phase Three, which is the compression below the midpoint. With the general increase that we're expecting, we want to get closer to that market value. We will be

working with the departments to look at compression, and we will probably be following up around the time of the general increase with the implementation for the compression. But we of course have to say that July 1 date for the implementation of the GI that we're expecting.

President Amiridis – The update from the Statehouse:

The House put in 3% and the Senate put in 5%. The expectation is that it will end up somewhere in between.

*What is your stance on staff members paying for parking?*

I wish that it could be free, but it is not possible in this urban environment with the space we have.

*Are there any plans to improve administrative infrastructure?*

I can increase staff members. In some areas, selectively, with the funds that we have, we are doing this. We can also improve administrative infrastructure by trying to minimize all things that don't immediately need to be done.

*We need more resources to support both traditional and online learning now that both types are intertwined.*

That is up for discussion. We do not want to become an online University because if we do that, we will lose a good portion of our students. Parents ask, "Why are there so many online classes? That's not what I'm paying for." On the other hand, I have also had students saying it inconvenient and I would like to have one or two online classes. They expect to pay less for online classes because they don't require the same infrastructure and facilities. We cannot lose what we have: our strength of face-to-face. I do not think that online learning can be equal in size, but at the same time, it will have to be a component, but only as far as it benefits the students, not us.

Last year, I committed 10 million to IT to continue improving the backbone of the system. With the network that we had, we significantly improved access in the residence halls, but not in the academic units. Seven million will go towards this, and three million is to continue upgrading the classes. This is not to replace classes, but to bring things that the faculty want in terms of connectivity and give the students the opportunity to be connected during classes. Students want the network to work from here all the way to the DMSB or in the dorms that are even further and never lose connectivity. This is difficult and will cost more money, but you will see a difference in your work environment.

The third question is about physical infrastructure. We have a lot of old buildings. We want to make sure that from a health and safety perspective, they are fine. Beyond health and safety, I cannot claim that every building will have the most modern standards and fantastic functions. Are some of these buildings worth salvaging? We are at the point where it is getting more expensive to maintain buildings than to blow them up. We cannot do this on the Horseshoe, but there are some that we can replace. In the next month or so, you will see a master plan about student housing, which is facing the exact same problem.

When can we expect to hear more information about the new health sciences campus?

This is in the design phase now. The college of medicine is involved in the design, and the design phase will take almost a year. Soon after, we will begin construction. There are going to be two very large buildings. If things end up the way they look right now with the State House, we may get additional funding to build a small clinical facility next to the two.

*Where do we stand on continuous support for DEI efforts? How have the recent discussions at the South Carolina Statehouse regarding DEI affected our campus strategic planning efforts?*

The second one is easy. Our campus strategic planning efforts have remained the same. When we are looking at what is happening at the House right now, it is a very low probability that any Bills that are admitted will make it through both chambers in this session. I do not anticipate any bill that will come out of this session that will address DEI issues. There were a couple bills that were just filed in the House. One states basically that DEI parameters are not affecting the hiring process, in essence saying that you cannot discriminate in hiring any individual among this group, not the opposite way. The other one is more extended. I don't worry that either of will get through, and if they did, it doesn't change what we are doing right now because we don't hire people because of the color of their skin or because of who they are. We hire the best people, and we provide equal opportunity to all. That's what the Equal Opportunity Act is saying. What will happen when the Supreme Court makes a decision? How will this affect next year? I don't know. Whatever will happen, we will make our case. Without an inclusive environment, our students cannot succeed. We're trying to create an environment where everybody is respected and included. The reason we did not see a bill like what other states have seen is because at the House, there was a discussion that took place where several representatives talked about veterans and students with disabilities. We are trying to be inclusive for everyone. That day, they removed the bill from the budget. Let me reiterate that being an inclusive environment and inclusive excellence are core values of this university. You cannot be inclusive if you do not have diversity. We need diversity and we need to be inclusive in anything that we do. This core value is not changing. I know that it is upsetting when we see what other states may be doing, but I think we are doing okay.

Senator Sims – When you talk about maintaining staff and keeping people here, have we talked about increased efforts of hiring within from USC graduates?

President Amiridis – One thing that we are doing this year is hiring development officers. We are going to hire 20 new development officers. If you are graduating this year, you are eligible, regardless of the major. We will train you. Indiana University will train them for six months, so they will be certified, and then they will stay with us. So, this is a good example of exactly what you are describing, and I suspect that we may see other entry level positions in the University doing the exact same thing. These new graduates know the university much better than anything, and they love the university.

Senator Hull – How can we retain staff retain staff? How can we make university processes faster and more efficient? How can we improve the student experience? I think these are not three separate things. Students, faculty, and staff are all frustrated with inefficient and slow processes. Staff can't focus on process improvement when all their time and energy is dedicated to doing the required tasks of their job. There are frequent staff vacancies. I would encourage you that as you think about how best to allocate limited university resources, investing in the

staff is a good investment. Staff can improve the experience of everybody at the university if they have the availability to do so.

President Amiridis – Thank you. We are trying to do the best that we can, but the problem is that this is recurring money, which is the most difficult money to find. When you hire people, you want to use recurring money.

Senator Morgan – How will HR communicate with staff about what is currently occurring in Phase Three? What is the timeline for Phase Three to be completed? How does HR decide what departments and divisions to start with?

VP Agardy – We've contacted the various service and academic units to determine their priorities for increasing staff salaries. We have four lined up to meet with. Our HR team meets with them to give them a tool to look at their workforce that is below the midpoint. Then, we meet a second time with them to make sure they don't have any questions and to discuss things with them so they can make better decisions. At the end of the six-week period, they give us a spreadsheet with who they want to increase, and then we ensure things like equity among jobs. But it has to be a unit that has the funds to do this. We hope to start and finish our starter before the end of this fiscal year, and some of them will be finalized before the end of the fiscal year because it's a six-week process.

Senator Morgan – I'm concerned about current employees because we have people coming into positions who are getting paid the same amount that the current employee is getting, and they've been in their position for maybe seven or eight years. I'm concerned about the gap.

VP Agardy – That's what I'm talking about when I use the word compression. It is ensuring that those who come in today are not making the same salary as those who are already here. We will move them up toward the market value of the job, but we will do that systematically. We will look at years of experience, credentials, and performance ratings to decide what their compensation should be.

Is there a way to update credentials?

VP Agardy – There is a way in PeopleSoft. We do count certifications that are related to your job when we consider compensation, so if your HR group doesn't know that, please let them know what your certifications are as you obtain them.

A year or two ago, I recall an HR town hall where they said that they were adding a formal exit interview. Have we collected any data from that process?

VP Agardy – We have a lot of data. Everyone who has left since July of last year has received a survey. We have compiled a lot of data, and we're going to be sharing that with our HR partners to help them develop a strategy on how to deal with that. We're going to give it to them on a dashboard so they can ensure they're looking at this on a regular basis.

President Amiridis – Let's not forget the hourly. We moved last year from 12 to 14, and we're not done yet. This year especially, if there are going to be raises for the salaried employees, we are going to need to do something about the hourly as well.

EVP Lusk – How can this body be better advocates in the community to help the administration and share what is going on and the good work we do in the community?

President Amiridis – This year, we had a good legislative system. A lot of the requests that we made came through. Now is the time to build advocacy. When I show up, and they know that I'm from the University of South Carolina, they don't listen to me as much as they would their constituents. The biggest advantage that we have is the number of people that we have out, including our staff members and our faculty, that can advocate with their local representatives. We are working on setting up a network that will have all of the information specifically to send people to one or two legislators in their district that have a connection with them. And we will ask our staff members, "Who is your legislator that you can text?" Not just sending an email. Who is it that you can influence?

Senator Holt: With the cost of living that we got last year, when we combined that with tuition freeze, we had to make some difficult decisions about how funding filtered down through academic versus support units. There was a bit of a squeeze from the support units that I could tell. What is your perspective on this going forward?

President Amiridis: We'll cover the increases for every unit. They are also offering insurance increases from the state. I put some of the first money I had to help cover this difference. Last year we tried to provide some balance later in the process, but this year it's from the beginning.

### ***Rushondra James, President***

#### Elections

Staff senator elections have begun! Thank you to Kelley Fink for leading this membership committee. Voting closes on the 24<sup>th</sup> and new senators will be announced on the 9<sup>th</sup>. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, we'll get a blast out to the University about the new senators, and then we'll have orientation. The location will be the Darla Moore School of Business. We will let you know the exact location later. It will be a 9am-4pm meeting.

#### Imagine Carolina

Since we last met, we have met with a sub-committee for next steps. We are aiming for the end of April.

#### Give 4 Garnet

Begins April 19<sup>th</sup>. You don't have to wait until then to give.

#### Staff Senate Awards

We have done a lot of amazing work with Chris and his committee. We are looking to roll out the nomination process soon. Everyone will get an email introducing the inaugural staff senate awards. From there, any staff or faculty can nominate. You will log in with your credentials. There is a series of questions that is required. These dates are just ballpark dates, but the idea is to keep it open for a couple weeks.

Reminder that current Staff Senators are not eligible.

Word of the month: Tenacity. Keep doing what you're doing! Rest but don't quit. It's amazing the level of work, care, and attention that you put toward the University of South Carolina.

**Reports of Committees:**

**Membership:** Kelley Fink

1) Senate Seat Elections

a. Preparation

- i. 100 + nominations
- ii. 83 Candidates
- iii. 29 Colleges/divisions with senate seats
- iv. 45 Senate seats open
- v. 5 Senators continuing their term until June 2024
- vi. 29 Ballots
- vii. 2 Colleges/Divisions will not have elections
  - 1. Research – no candidate, but there is still one seated Senator (Beth Herron - term ends in June 2024)
  - 2. Moore School of Business – still have one seated Senator (Georgia Doran - term ends in June 2024)
- viii. 1 Department requested paper ballots

b. Implementation

- i. Election dates – 4/11/2023 – 4/24/2023 (polls opened one day late due to technical glitches with the Voting Module system.
- ii. Senators – Please encourage your constituents to please cast their vote.
- iii. Messaging distributed on 4/11/2023
- iv. Messaging to be distributed on 4/21/2023
- v. Paper Ballots - only University Housing requested paper ballots. Michelle Knight is coordinating ballot distribution, vote counting and reporting
- vi. Remaining Timeline

**2023 Senator Elections Timeline**

<b>Due Date for Task</b>	<b>Task to Complete</b>
4/11/2023	Paper ballots distributed
4/11/2023	Election Campaigns may begin
4/11/2023	Election Voting Opens
4/21/2023	Election Voting closes/concludes
5/2/2023	Certification of Senator Elections by Staff Senate Executive Committee
5/8/2023	Candidate Notification
5/9/2023	Full slate of newly elected senators announced
5/10/23-5/12/2023	Election results notification to university personnel
6/22/2023	New Senator Orientation

c. Evaluation

- i. Planning to conduct debrief to record successes and challenges – will provide notes for future Membership Committee

d. THANKS

-BIG Thank you to all the members of the Membership Committee and the Communications Committee (Vanessa Berry, Shelley Dempsey, Justin Griffis, Michelle Knight, Caroline Maulana, Carol Mitchell, and Emily Poveromo) for their help with the logistics for the Senate Elections.

-HUGE THANK you to Jessica McKie and Rushondra James for their dedication to preparing and implementing the elections process.

-Additionally, thank you to other departments on campus for their partnership to plan and implement the 2023 Staff Senate Elections including the following:

-Bridget Leslie and the DoIT staff (Eric Patterson) for their hard work to develop a nomination system and the with the Voting Module.

-Carol Mitchell and the School of Law staff for their hard work with the creation of the recruitment video.

-Senator Chris Burkett (College of Education), Senator Melissa Kupfer (College of Nursing) and Senator Kim Rose (Administration and Finance) for their willingness to serve on the panel for the recruitment video

-Antonio Peterson (DoIT), Dwaun Seller (Arnold School of Public Health), Craig Brandhorst (Communications and Public Affairs), and Jessica McKie for the assistance with the website.

-Megan Colascione (Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support) for her support with email distributions.

2) End-of-Year Planning

-Committee members are preparing documents to pass to the next committee (to assist with 2023-2024 committee projects).

3) Senator Mentoring Proposal

The committee submitted a proposal to the Executive Committee to develop a Staff Senator Mentor program focused on newly appointed senators (when filling a senate seat vacancy). Just waiting to hear back from the group on the proposal.

**Communications:** Dwuan Sellers/Craig Brandhorst

- continued to support the membership committee in their efforts to promote the current staff senate election cycle.
- updated the website's home page with a new banner image and direct link to the updated 'about' page, which has become the hub for elections. (There you will find the senate elections timeline posted, a video added of current staff senators discussing their experience and most importantly, the voting system live and operational).
- kept the site updated with the next meeting information, agenda and virtual link. (We also make sure to post the previous meeting video footage onto our YouTube page and then onto the website.)
- scheduled a photographer from Office of Communications to shoot photos of the president's visit to Staff Senate



After elections, we will refocus our efforts on getting the executive committee videos produced and posted as well as communicating notable efforts and activities from each committee that may result in a write-up on the site.

**Staff Policy and Well-Being:** Megan Colascione

No updates at this time.

**Professional Development:** Georgia Doran

- Continued discussion – Professional Development topics and speakers to be contacted.
- Determined the following speakers should be considered:
  - Ed Walton
  - Mary Alexander
- Determined that 3X per year for Professional Development is the correct amount of PD offerings. (I.e., Fall, Spring and Summer)
- May PD Offering (Emotional Intelligence) declined by Exec Committee as Rex Tolliver is already confirmed to speak at the May Staff Senate meeting.
- Emergency Training topic is finalized for Summer 2023 – June 13th. Steve has agreed to coordinate with Scott Ellis. Georgia to email Exec Committee for permission.
- Tyson reported Jeff Black agreed to an additional PD presentation. Fall 2023 considered.
- Additional discussion was held related to: HR Challenges, COL proposed raise in SC Senate, staff retention, updates on HR Forum held March 15th and difficulty posting positions. PD Committee to suggest that Carolina Agardy again attend a General Staff Senate meeting.

**Community Projects:** Brian Hull

There is still time to volunteer for Give It Up For Good. The project will run April 17th thru May 12th (Mon-Fri).

GIUFG is a massive annual project that takes place towards the end of the Spring semester. Keeping in line with the Universities sustainability efforts, we divert an average of 25 tons of furniture, clothing, houseware items, and food from the landfills each year. These are all personal items from our students and their living spaces that they chose to donate for one reason or another. Once collected from the residence halls the items are taken to a central location for sorting or distribution to one of our outside partners. We have typically donated to Habitat For Humanity or Goodwill.

Volunteers can sign up here:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=GUsqSzXRDkKLsrHNI4mYzIo6CfAgqM1NlkaTRzYkITJUQkZWNVZPRkoxTVhUN0tDVU4yRE85QzMzQy4u>

**Bylaws:** Kim Rose

- Our monthly meeting was canceled; however, no pressing issues to discuss. Should any of the committees would like to discuss an update revision, please reach out to the By-Laws Committee.

**Staff Senate Awards Committee (Ad-Hoc):** Chris Burkett

- Proposed date to have a USC Staff Celebration/drop-in: Tuesday, June 06 or Thursday, June 08
- USC Staff Award nomination form is online.
- Staff Award Selection Sub-Committee has been identified and a chair is being appointed.
  - The committee will meet and create a rubric for the award selection.
- Proposed timeline for the Staff Award process:
  - Nomination email with online link to form to be distributed (hopefully by USC HR) to all USC Staff week of April 10, 2023
  - Nominations accepted until Friday, April 28, 2023, at 11:59pm
  - Staff Award Selection Sub-Committee meets ongoing and selects award finalists/winners May 1 through May 11, 2023
  - Staff Award Selection Sub-Committee chair sends Rushondra James list of finalists/award winners.
  - All finalists/winners notified, Monday, May 15
  - Finalists/winners plaques ordered, Monday, May 15

**Staff Senate Scholarship/Fundraising Committee (Ad-Hoc): Loren Murphy**

- As of 4/10/23, we have raised a total of \$556.55 from 14 donors.
- Give4Garnet is Wednesday, April 19 but you can give early by using our Staff Senate link: <https://give4garnet.sc.edu/staffsenate>.

***Additional Announcements***

Upcoming meetings:

- 5/9: Carlton Washington, SC State Employees Association
- 6/13: Rex Tolliver, VP Student Affairs Academic Support
- 6/22 Staff Senate Orientation

***Adjourn***

Senator Burkett made a motion to adjourn. Senator Holt seconded the motion to adjourn. All senators were in favor. The formal meeting adjourned at 4:09 PM.

**Next meeting: Tuesday, May 9, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. in the Lumpkin Auditorium, Close-Hipp Building, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Hilson

Secretary  
Staff Senate

