

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STAFF SENATE MEETING**

Tuesday, February 8, 2022
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Closs Hipp Building, Lumpkin Auditorium

PRESIDING: Shelley Dempsey, PhD, President

Call to Order – Shelley Dempsey, PhD, President

President Shelley Dempsey called the meeting to order at 3:00p.m. and welcomed staff senators and visitors to the full staff senate meeting.

Roll Call/Attendance Report - Andrenette Hudley, Secretary

Secretary Andrenette Hudley checked the roll through the QR Code. According to the attendance report, 36 senators were in attendance, 9 senators were absent, and 5 senators gave proxies.

Establish Quorum - Tyson Lusk, Parliamentarian

Based on the attendance report, Secretary Andrenette Hudley declared a quorum established and Parliamentarian Tyson Lusk declared business can be conducted.

Approval of Minutes – Tyson Lusk, Parliamentarian

There were no changes to the January 11, 2022, staff senate meeting minutes. Senator Wright Culpepper made a motion to accept the January 11, 2022, general body staff senate minutes as written. Senator Megan Colascione second the motion and all senators were in favor. The motion was adopted, and the minutes were accepted as written.

Reports of Officers - Tyson Lusk, Parliamentarian

By-laws Amendments

Parliamentarian Lusk introduced two amendments from the bylaws committee and the executive committee. The first one was vetted by the bylaws and executive committees.

Staff Policy and Welfare Committee - Name Change – Tyson Lusk, Parliamentarian

There was a request from the Staff Policy and Welfare Committee to change their name to Staff Policy and Well-Being Committee. They want to change the welfare to well-being. The bylaws committee and the executive committee unanimously approved it. This is the full body notification of the proposed change. The full body will vote on the proposed change to the committee's name at the next full body meeting. If anyone has any questions, please feel free to reach out to Parliamentarian Lusk, any member of the bylaws Committee or the current Staff Policy and Welfare Committee.

Web and Technology Appointment Amendment – Tyson Lusk, Parliamentarian

The second amendment is to allow the president of the staff senate to appoint ex officio members-non-voting members. The two appointments that are currently in mind are a web official and a technology official. As we've gone through the first year, we've realized we need expertise in certain areas such as web and technology. So, we certainly want to lean on our colleagues that have expertise in web and technology. So, the bylaws committee will review the amendment to add the web and technology appointment to the staff senate at their next meeting and then we will bring it to the full staff senate body. Those are the two amendments that will be presented to the

full body soon. If any questions come up, please reach out to Parliamentarian Lusk or any member of the bylaws or executive committees.

Reports of Committees (As Needed):

Membership – Vanessa Berry/Caroline Maulana

No report

Communications – Lauren Angelo-Duck/Bailey Watts

No Report

Staff Policy and Well-Being – Megan Colascione/Ja-Nee Epps

The top five benefit areas that the staff senate voted for are ([survey results attached](#)):

1. Free or reduced parking permits
2. Medical insurance with no co-pay or annual deductible
3. Modified summer work schedule
4. Better dental coverage
5. (Tied for 5th) Flexible use of sick leave as wellness leave
6. (Tied for 5th) Paid parental leave

The Staff Policy and Well-Being Committee will take this information and start conversations with university leadership to advocate for change. As this committee focuses on these efforts, we encourage all staff senators to utilize the data collected from their constituents and start dialogues with their department/unit leadership on improvements for the staff experience in their respective areas. If any staff senator is interested in collaborating with members of this committee on the topics listed above, please reach out to the committee through the Microsoft Teams channel.

Professional Development – Melissa Kupfer/Leroy Sims

No Report

Community Project – Joe Fortune/Katherine Hilson

The committee met with the Gamecock Pantry leadership last week who encouraged and requested the committee shift the Top 5 Drive focus from February to March. The committee will be circling back with their student leadership team this week and will have more information about the Top 5 Drive in the coming weeks, before the March 8 meeting.

By-Laws- Bo Hart/ Kim Rose

No Report

Ad hoc Committee – Wright Culpepper

No Report

Order of Business

Officer Candidate Update - *Co-Chairs Leena Holt and Angela Wright*

President Dempsey reminded senators of the deadline to send in their materials if they are interested in one of the officer positions. If you have a question about a position, please contact Leena Holt or Angela Wright. We would love to see more applications or nominations.

Senators can still apply for an officer position. So don't be nervous. If you have any questions, let Leena or Angela know. They will be sending information to those who have applied and who have put their name in for an officer. So, in the next week or two the full body will get information regarding those who have applied for positions. Angela and Leena will be communicating at the March 8th full body meeting what the nominations will look like. We want the full body to feel comfortable, and give senators guidelines on how much time they will have to speak, the number of slides they use, etc.

If you have any questions about the process, we want you to ask them. Leena and Angela got a lot of good questions recently about the senator election process and how it will work and what are the changes from last year. Individuals will be elected to the officer roles and then once we know what the vacancies are based on who is put into officer positions, we will then figure out which units need to have positions filled. Senators will work specifically with those colleges, units, and organizations as needed.

Our membership committee is wonderful. They're going to take the lead on the senator process, but we're going to use the electronic process just like we did last year. We're still learning. They're always going to be a glitch with technology, but we really do believe in our system and the voting process of using the HR feed into our system. We do not want to manipulate data. HR gives us the data and we put that into our voting system and that's how it works. We don't want to manually change anything.

So, if you know of a unit that was not aligned correctly in HR, please tell us or Bridget. Bridget will be helping us with that because we really do have to work with HR to get that fixed. We are not manually changing people to align. It really is based on EPMS and who you report to. If you don't feel it should not be that way talk to the leadership in your area, to have them realigned. What we can't do is have a bunch of people telling us, well, I'm an advisor, but I'm in the College of XYZ and so I should vote with XYZ. That will get us into the issue of are those fair votes if we are moving around the voters because we of where we think they align. We will follow HR. If you have any questions or concerns about that, let us know. We really want to go into elections in a transparent manner, with everybody understanding how things work.

Guest Speaker

Jason Stacy, MD, Interim Vice President of Health and Well-Being, Chief Health Officer

Dr. Stacey shared that his focus of discussion today will be on the Omicron variant. The new variant. It spreads very quickly. Typically, this is a milder disease than what we saw with some of the other variants. We still need to take it seriously. But it is typically a little bit milder. Most people are experiencing headaches, sore throat, fatigue, and sneezing. We're seeing some gastrointestinal symptoms from this variant a few days down the road, 5-6 days down the road. Some people are having some nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, so it's not everybody, but we're seeing that as well.

We are still engaged with campus testing. College of Pharmacy is doing a great job testing high volumes of people and we're still reporting in under 24 hours after testing. You know, about 1500

people a day testing and still reporting at under 24 hours, which has been great. We peaked on January 17th when we had over 400 infections in one day on campus. That was just through our College of Pharmacy. That's not including what happened in the Center for Health and Well-Being, or people that tested at home. We had a 24.6% positivity rate that day, so that was a lot. University Health Services patient numbers have gone down because people aren't as sick right now. Our wastewater data has also shown we've seen a decrease in the amount of virus on campus the last three weeks as well.

When we hit this surge, contact tracing was one of the big lifts. It was one of the important things we needed to do. We shifted our focus from staff members to focus on that. Today we had to try and reach all those people and let them know what was going on. We've changed our priorities. We prioritize the students that we're living on campus as our first contacts. The ones that we're from out of state, we contacted them first to get them moved into our isolation dorm. We prioritize our students who are on campus but lived out or in the state to call them up. Tell them and give them time to pack up their stuff and go home with mom and dad. Then we got to our employees and off campus students. That's how we managed getting through that huge surge. We've also modified our isolation guidelines based on the new CDC guidelines, to be that five-day isolation. Day Zero is the day you test positive, or you have your first symptoms and five days of isolation and then wear a tight-fitting mask.

If your symptoms are resolving, you come back to work, back to school back or to whatever you need to. Is that based on science? They've found that this virus spreads faster, but it also the days you're most likely to spread it is one to two days before you get symptoms. But what about three days after the symptoms. That's why we changed to that new five-day isolation and quarantine plan. We look at our vaccination rates across the US. Fully vaccinated individuals mean those with two doses of Moderna or one dose of Johnson & Johnson. 63% of individuals have done that across the country.

In South Carolina, where closer to 53% but our on-campus data is much better. On our dashboard today students are 71.3% vaccinated faculty, 81.4%, staff members, 68% and overall, on campus where 71.5% vaccinated. That is the minimum amount because there may be some people that are on here who still haven't given us a card. So that's the minimum amount. Boosters are still available because that is the best protection that you've got. So, getting boosted is preventing you from ending up in the hospital and ending up having worst or worse problems from COVID.

Masking is the next thing I'll jump into obviously not everybody loves it, but it is really a great mitigation tool. Hardly seen any flu on campus and we think that's because of the masks we've been wearing flu seasons these last two years have been almost nonexistent, so that has been a good thing. So, keep wearing the masks for right now. People are saying what mask do I need to wear. Any mask is better than no mask and a mask that you're willing to wear for a prolonged period is the mask that we need to be choosing. But if you're looking for the best, it's either one of those KN95 or an N95 and then the surgical masks would also be worth looking into. So, as I close, I would just like to thank each one of you for wearing your mask, but for getting tested and modifying your lives to help improve the health of the other individuals on campus.

Dr. Stacey answered the following questions from the senators.

- Can you get vaccinated at the Center for Health and Well-Being? Yes, any day of the week between 9:00am and 3:00pm.

- Who has the lowest rate of being vaccinated on campus? Staff has the lowest percentage in terms of vaccination rates.
- What is being done to help improve vaccination rates across campus and how can we as members of staff senate help? We still have the garnet and VAX program going on. It's not the incentive-based part, it's the educational component. We can help by deploying a vaccine educator over to speak to your area. The Center for Health and Well-Being would be happy to do that. If you want to email Dr. Stacy, please do so, he can help put someone in touch with you.
- Dr. Stacy encouraged people to have personal conversations with their health care provider or someone that they trust. It is beneficial for your health. Every Tuesday Prisma puts on an infectious disease conference at noon.
- What metrics will the university use to make the determination to relax wearing mask? There has been some dialogue regarding the relaxation of wearing mask, but nothing has been determined yet.
- What is the university doing to prepare for spring break? We know that students go out during spring break and then return to school. What actions are we taking and what can we do regarding their return? Have conversations with the students and continue testing and masking.
- Do they still allow dependents to get tested on campus? Yes, they are still allowing dependents to be tested at Synovus.
- Why are people who test positive allowed to come back to campus after five days, but technically they are still contagious? Part of that was to try to allow people to get back to life a little quicker, knowing that they are less contagious. Some people are infectious for a really short period of time were hardly at all, even though they will test positive, whereas other people can remain positive, but not necessarily shed virus. So, we try to take the science and do the best that we can with allowing people to get back to life a little quicker and be respectful of others. So, the tight-fitting mask is really the key because it's called source containment. So, if you're wearing a mask and you cough, it is tight fitting.
- Contact Tracing for Staff? Most staff members who knew that they were positive already we're staying home. We will call them, but it is the next day and most staff members who tested would know their results by 8:00am in the morning and they would just stay home. We are usually calling staff around 9:00am doing contact tracing when they already know their results. We could be using that time and discussing with students on campus their results. Currently they're in their dorm room and we need to get them. Staff are doing a better job taking care of themselves, so they required less effort on our part, if that makes sense.
- When can we start relaxing the mandates and regulations? I don't want to speak out of turn and tell you this is when it's going to happen because I honestly don't know yet. There's a lot of other people involved in that decision. One thing to consider is that many faculty, staff, and students have children who are not yet able to be vaccinated.
- What happens if you test positive today? You are exempted for 90 days from the testing protocol. Some people will test positive for a very long period. It can be a month or more, and especially with our PCR tests, those are more accurate. Even if you're not shedding virus, you can still test positive on a PCR. That's why we don't really want someone who tests positive on day five to test again. Well, you're likely to continue test positive. If you're really looking for a test to see if you are currently infected, the antigen tests or the rapid test is better for that, but Dr. Stacy still wouldn't recommend retesting.

- Staff were told services were going to be offered to us that would be beneficial. There were so many other things that needed to take priority and the long answer to your question is yes, we want to offer more things to faculty and staff, but we're still trying to figure out what the best things are to offer and how to offer them. Also, we want to do it in a way that makes sense to staff in a cost effective and efficient manner. We want to make sure that we can take your insurance if you're coming over there for medical care. We don't want to create a system where it leads to negative press and people unhappy with what they get. There are still things that you can access, including free vaccines, COVID and flu. There are wellness opportunities and through EAP you have access to six free counseling appointments. It's not through University Health Services, but it's accessible through EAP. Additionally, you can get some wellness coaching through University Health Services. You can get your labs drawn free of charge. We want to make sure that we're doing it well and doing it right. We really need to hire a consultant to help us do it right rather than do it quickly and then have people not happy with it. We started to look at other universities regarding different ways they offer health services.
- Is the Center for Health and Well-Being going to hire more counselors for the students? Yes, they did hire some people through the fall, and you know, onboard them and got them up to up to speed so they can see people. They are currently making changes to include more available appointments that can be web booked on a same day basis. So, if a student needs help there may be some appointments for them to make on their phone. In addition, there are walk-in appointments every single day of the week that go unused, so if a student really needs to be seen, they can walk in and say I need help and they will get taken care of. I know not everyone wants to do that because they are not in crisis.
- Is the University Health Services going to have faculty and staff clinics? There was a survey asking faculty and staff members what they wanted. There really wasn't one main thing, so I'm trying to figure out what is the most useful way to structure it. If we are going to use resources, they must be able to sustain itself with people using it and receiving care. Vanessa Berry is going to be helping us by using her expertise in HR. She has been involved in some of the discussions. The most important thing is doing it in a way that helps people, and it be sustainable because the University Health Services cannot finance it. It's just we have too many other things we're trying to finance. We all come to work here. We pay to park, so we support parking services every single day. So, if we're going to have a faculty and staff clinic it must be sustained by someone other than University Health Services. Unless we find some place in the budget where it can come from, because as of now we don't have a budget line item. We cannot use student dollars to finance a faculty and staff clinic.

Announcements (Executive Committee or Senators)

Senator Bridget Leslie serves as an Employee Campaign Director for the United Way. She encouraged senators to contribute and that could be done every pay period. It goes along way with the pandemic. We have had students, faculty, and staff make financial contributions. Please consider!

Adjourn

President Shelley Dempsey adjourned the full body staff senate meeting at 4:20pm.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 8, 2022- Close/Hipp Lumpkin Auditorium

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrenette F. Hudley

Secretary, Staff Senate