

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STAFF SENATE MEETING**

Tuesday, September 13, 2022
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Close-Hipp Building, Lumpkin Auditorium, 8th Floor

PRESIDING: Rushondra James, PhD, President

Call to Order – Rushondra James, PhD, President

President Rushondra James called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM and welcomed staff senators and visitors to the full staff senate meeting.

Roll Call/Attendance Report - Katherine Hilson, Secretary

Secretary Hilson checked the roll after taking attendance. According to the attendance report, 40 senators were in attendance, 7 senators were absent, 4 senators gave proxies, and 2 senators were virtual.

Establish Quorum - Bo Hart, Parliamentarian

Based on the attendance report, Secretary Hilson declared a quorum was established and Parliamentarian Bo Hart declared business could be conducted.

Approval of Minutes – Rushondra James, PhD, President

There were no changes to the August 9, 2022, staff senate meeting minutes. Senator Kupfer made a motion to accept the August 9, 2022 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.

Guest Speakers

Molly Peirano – AVP for Civil Rights and Title IX

The Office of Civil Rights & Title IX is on a mission to create an environment where all people are treated with dignity and respect and have an equal opportunity to learn and work at a university free from discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct.

Some background about the office:

- New Office of Civil Rights & Title IX
- New Assistant Vice President reporting to the Office of the President
- Transitioning from the Equal Opportunity Program Office, which no longer exists
- New policies and website launched!

AVP Peirano shared a list of key civil rights laws, a new list of protected classes, what is deemed as sexual misconduct and the new regulation on prohibited relationships in the workplace.

She also discussed how we should act as first responders in certain situations, how to report through their office [report form](#), calling their office (803)-777-3854, emailing civilrights@mailbox.sc.edu or visiting their office at 901 Sumter Street, Byrnes Building, Suite 401.

As staff members of the University of South Carolina, we all have a duty to report: All University of South Carolina employees are required to report incidents of discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and related retaliation to the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX. Exceptions: confidential resources, student-employees outside of their scope of work, public survivor support events. *Note this is from forthcoming policy and the final policy will be disseminated.

She also shared the training and education components her office is currently working on and will roll out in the next few years including online modules, in-person sessions, search committee training development (with HR and DEI), accessibility and disability policies/procedures and more.

Senator Burkett asked is there any movement on the online modules and is there any conversation about doing refreshers without doing all the modules?

AVP Peirano responded, yes, there is a posting for an education specialist to build out different options and we are eager to fill that role soon.

Senator Doran asked for direction of when we would be involved with AVP Peirano's office versus specific division Human Resources representatives.

AVP Peirano responded it could be a little bit of both but if you're unsure, you're welcome to start with either. But if you report some type of discrimination or harassment, it should come to our office either from you, or your HR contacts. We want to be consistent.

Senator Sellers asked if there is going to be some sort of trainings that will result in some sort of visual such as a SafeZone training sticker.

AVP Peirano responded that at this time no, but we're sibling offices with DEI. I know they have some great training programs, but I hear what you're saying and I'll bring that back.

Senator Herron asked about what level of relationship was reportable among colleagues and if AVP Peirano was worried about mostly rumors versus serious relationships.

AVP Peirano responded that if the relationship is impacting work, then we need to know.

EVP Lusk asked if you had an elevator speech, what would it be?

AVP Peirano responded that if anyone feels like they have been mistreated because of any part of their identity. We want to be helpful in restoring access to that opportunity and we will investigate it and receive it with open hearts and minds.

Reports of Officers:

Dr. Rushondra James – President

First of all, thank you for your service this far! Thank you for your diligence. I want to remind all of you, that we need active participation from each of you. The bulk of what we do is through our committee work, and I want to remind you to please make sure you let us know what's going on and you need to be active in your committees. I know life happens, but as much as possible please try to be engaged. If you can't come to everything, figure out what you can do and go forth and do that! I just want to remind everyone that we are here to serve and we need to all serve our constituents and this university. Thank you for everything you've done and will do!

Tyson Lusk – Executive Vice President

We have an incredible ally in Provost Arnett! Executive Committee met with her and discussed several initiatives including meeting space, dean searches, ombudsperson for staff, and our desire to have non-voting representation on the board of trustees. Just so you all are aware, we asked if we could use this space at no cost and before we left the meeting it was done! So thank you Provost Arnett!

I also wanted to update everyone that I now sit on this advisory board for the Russell House University Union. RHUU is hiring student employees and has been renovated as well as the student bookstore.

All senators and university members can give thoughts and feedback on pending the Policy Advising Committee (PAC) items and potential policies.

Senator Burkett – Staff Awards Ad-Hoc Committee

I serve as the chair for the Staff Awards committee. Our current charge is to develop staff awards for all-staff on campus. We are looking for criteria and formal HR processes and plan to do all of that with careful consideration and expediency. We need to do some research and lay a little groundwork for what our peers are doing to recognize staff. We are asking for information from your units, divisions, colleagues, etc. and Jessica will send out a survey to see what we want to do as a committee. Let me know if you have any questions!

Reports of Committees (As Needed):

Membership: Mike Dial/Kelley Fink

Senator Dial shared the committee is already thinking about next year's election cycle and the committee wants to ensure the officer positions launch in mid-December. The current timeline would be nominations launched in mid-December and elections would take place at the January Staff Senate general body meeting. This change would require a Bylaws update, so I will reach out after the next meeting to firm things up and ensure we are on track to have this voted in, should everyone agree. General Senator elections will begin in mid-Spring, then we will have onboarding for new Staff Senators.

We are still investigating the allocation of Senators to different units and want to make sure everyone has a say if they're interested in sharing feedback. Highlight that we have new leadership and as organizational units, our allotments don't change until election time and we will get a list from HR in the next month and then we will allocate from there.

Communications: Craig Brandhorst/ Dwan Sellers

Senator Brandhorst shared that you will hear more but we are planning short videos highlighting senators and leadership. Stay tuned for more!

Staff Policy and Well-Being: Megan Colascione/Ja-Nae Epps

Senator Epps shared the new Provost has been in contact with Staff Senate about senators serving on search committees for their dean searches and otherwise.

Regarding the Staff Ombudsperson, we have a proposal together to have this position considered for the FY24.

Class and Comp study is completed. Departments and areas should hear information about how their area is handling the results and suggestions.

We are working on improving and understanding the experience of custodial and maintenance staff. We want to do a survey to get baseline of information but plan to hold off until Spring for completion.

Professional Development: Georgia Doran

Senator Doran shared the committee adapted and approved their charter and will have additional information for senators regarding PD opportunities soon.

Community Projects: Joseph Fortune/Christine Shelek

Senator Shelek shared they wanted to thank Senator Lee and Senator Hull who helped with the staff senate t-shirt, as well as Parliamentarian Hart. The committee has thought about on-campus move out and the idea to get things from them such as their food, potential furniture, etc. Also, an update that the Gamecock Pantry moved to the Coliseum in addition to the Carolina Closet.

September 29 is the benefits fair happening at RHUU. Several staff will be there on behalf of Staff Senate, please join us if you're able.

They also talked about the idea and desire for a few branded items to get the name out and make sure people can "see" us!

Bylaws: Kim Rose

No updates from the Bylaws committee at this time.

Dr. Rushondra James – President

I wanted to remind everyone that we have an ad-hoc Finance and Development Committee who is looking into funding and finances for us. Also, an idea about having an opportunity for Staff Senate to participate in Give for Garnet in the spring.

Bridget Leslie - Treasurer

This is a resolution to solidify the support for a staff ombudsperson with the initiative to financially support a full-time position.

This will be the first reading.

“Whereas, The University of South Carolina has worked tirelessly to raise a leading voice, ensuring fair and equitable treatment of members of the university community is addressed. Whereas, this full-time staff ombudsperson will be an impartial practitioner of conflict resolution who provides confidential and informal assistance to constituents. The ombudsperson will remain neutral and independent of normal management structures but will ultimately report to the Office of the President, Chief of Staff. More formally, this role will operate as an informal and impartial entity reporting to the top of the organization; provide anonymity through phone calls and meetings with constituents; act as a proactive change catalyst to impact staff retention; provide data from a neutral viewpoint to top management/leadership; provide a channel to seek confidential guidance based on terms and conditions of the ombuds program and, where appropriate, on assertion of privilege; provide off-the-record coaching for options to resolve problems and guidance to get information to the most appropriate channel in a timely manner; allow constituents to maintain control and determine resolution options (except for situations with an imminent risk of serious harm or information about abuse or neglect); and provide guidance and options for all types of work-related issues.

Whereas, currently, the university serves faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students with ombudspersons, but there is no representation for staff, noting that there are over 6,000 staff on the UofSC Columbia campus. Representing 65% of the campus workforce, staff do not have an impartial, confidential, neutral, and independent advocate to represent their concerns, viewpoints, and experiences.

Whereas, this position will allow the university to align with other peer & aspirant institutions to support staff such as Clemson University, Auburn University, University of Georgia, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Missouri, University of Tennessee, University of Florida, University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, University of Maryland-College Park, University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill, University of Virginia and the University of California - Berkeley.

Whereas, having a vested objective role to support staff will only augment the university's efforts with retention, inclusion, and equitableness without apprehension of retribution, while serving as a resource and benefit to the university.

Whereas, this position will align with the university's strategic initiatives by providing a dedicated and neutral resource supporting the largest university members that will help assemble and cultivate a world-class faculty and but more importantly, staff. This position will further help the university attract, recruit, hire, and retain a diverse and highly talented staff.

Therefore, be it resolved, the UofSC Staff Senate respectfully requests the UofSC Board of Trustees, the Provost Office, and its Executive Leadership to support and approve the establishment of a full-time equivalent staff Ombudsperson.

Be it further recommended that upon passage copies of this resolution be sent to the Board of Trustees, Dr. Michael Amiridis, University President, Dr. Donna Arnett Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Terry Parham, General Counsel, Julian Williams, VP of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Caroline Agardy, VP of Human Resources, Jeff Stensland, AVP of Media and External Engagement, Dr. Audrey Korsgaard, Chair of the Faculty Senate, Molly Peirano, Assistant Vice President for Civil Rights and Title IX/Title IX & ADA Coordinator, and Reedy Newton, Student Body President.”

Parliamentarian Hart shared in the bylaws it states that if you bring a resolution to the floor, a resolution can be voted on in the same meeting as long as we have a two-thirds vote to be read in the same meeting.

Treasurer Leslie moved to fast track the previously read resolution.

Senator Burkett seconded the motion.

39 Senators were in favor. Senator Dial abstained from voting.

Parliamentarian Hart said the amendment has been brought to the table and I will move to have the Senate to discuss this movement/motion.

Senator Kupfer thanked the committee for putting this together! I have a question about the wording when you talk about the world class faculty and I want to ask about why we had “more important” than “equally important”.

Treasurer Leslie responded, I think the essence is the committee is trying to capture is that there is representation for faculty and students, but not staff. I can make that edit in the resolution.

Treasurer moved to adopt the resolution with the newly added language in paragraph six. The words “but” and “more” will be taken out and replaced with “equally”. Also, change “importantly” will be changed to “important”.

Senator Rose second seconded the motion.

39 Senators were in favor. Senator Dial abstained from voting.

Additional Announcements

The Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support, Dr. Tolliver will be joining us for our November general body meeting. Provost Arnett will be joining us for our January meeting and President Amiridis will be joining us for our February meeting.

Senator Berry reminded everyone that it’s flu season and you can get your flu shot at the health center on September 28.

Senator Sims shared that if you ever want your office space sanitized if there’s an outbreak or something in your office, let him know.

Adjourn

Senator Dial made a motion to adjourn. Senator Shelek seconded the motion to adjourn. All senators were in favor. The formal meeting adjourned at 4:18 PM.

Next meeting: Tuesday, October 11, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. in the Lumpkin Auditorium, Close-Hipp Building, 8th Floor

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Hilson

Secretary

Staff Senate