Stephen F. Austin State University
Staff Council Meeting Notes
Monday, October 17, 2022
10:00 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.
McGee Business Building (Room 133) and Zoom

Attendees:

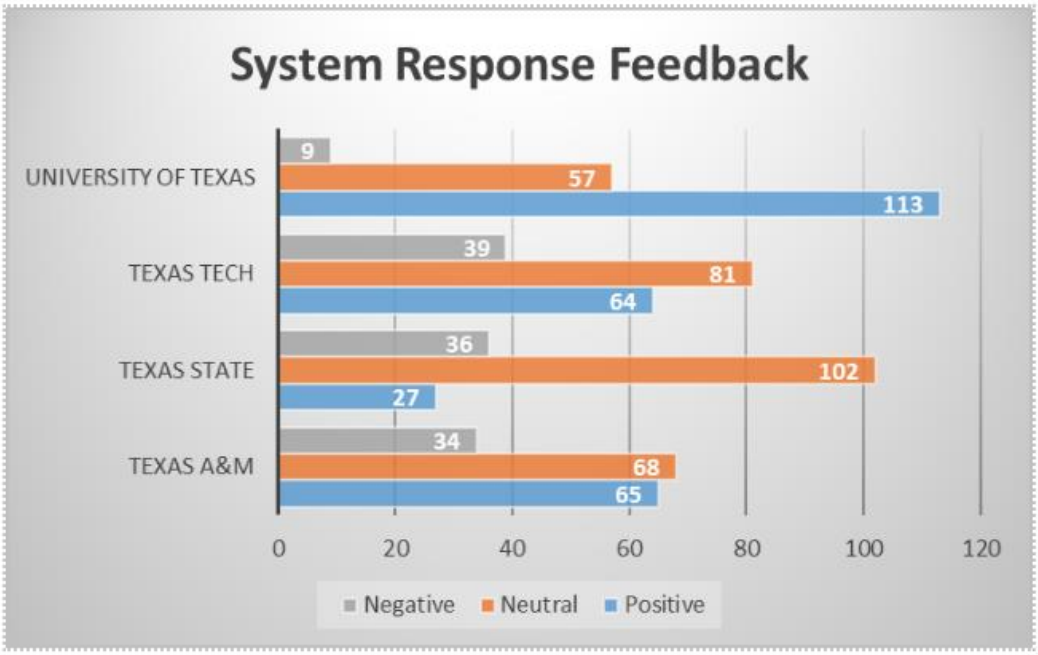
Attending Representatives	☒Chair: Alison Reed ☒ Chair-Elect: Grace Romero ☒Treasurer: Travis Killen ☒Secretary - Meredith Baily ☒Gina Ajero ☒Courtney Beavers ☒Veronica Beavers ☒Brittany Beck ☒ Sharon Brewer ☒Brandi Bryant ☒ Choya Coleman ☒ Surry Consford ☒ Sabrina Delaney ☒ Rebecca Galatas ☒Angela Harless ☒Veronica Herrera ☒Emily Keller ☒Agatha Moreland ☒Ashley Ward ☒Ken Morton ☒ Sabrina Delaney ☒ Rebecca Galatas ☒Angela Harless ☒Veronica Herrera ☒Emily Keller ☒Agatha Moreland ☒Ashley Ward ☒Ken Morton ☒Amanda Kennedy ☒ Nadia Sifuentes ☒Brandon Stringfield ☒Amanda Kennedy ☒ Nadia Sifuentes ☒Brandon Stringfield
Not Present	☐ Jordan Riley ☐Parliamentarian: Lissy Turner ☐Jennifer Crenshaw

Meeting Minutes

Topic	Minutes
I. Call to Order	Time: 10:00 a.m.
II. Roll Call	Secretary Baily called roll. Individuals noted above were in attendance. Heather Hawkins served as proxy for Representative Jennifer Crenshaw.
III. Meeting Minutes	a. August 8, 2022 • Motion by Representative Byrant • Seconded by Representative Beck • Unanimously Approved b. September 19, 2022 • Motion by Representative Beck • Seconded by Representative C. Beavers • Unanimously Approved
IV. Officer Reports	**a. Chair – Alison Reed** • Staff Council workshop held September 30 – Goals for this year consisted of pursuing salary equity, staff recognition, and an increase in campus involvement/representation for staff. Additionally, increasing the awareness of Staff Council through events, outreach, and recognition. • System Affiliation process – wrapped up the full process of question accumulation and summarization. Final draft resulted in 20 staff-centric questions posed to the systems for response. These responses are now posted online. Significant staff participation noted as instrumental to the success of the process. • Assisted with standing up committees.

	• SAA and Office of Student Engagement will host a Midnight Breakfast (December 5th & 6th from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.). Looking for faculty and staff volunteers. Sign-up: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=y67YrkMVMkig-dps9PqYMusLFwOUJGhPr2pp7qyOV5FURTQzRTRMR0U5VlZMQ0xaMkYzSjZSTTI3Qy4u.
	b. Chair-Elect – Grace Romero
	• Faculty Senate meeting on Sept. 14th with two speakers.
	  ○ Dr. Westbrook addressed the charge for groups on campus getting questions to send out to the systems. He noted if a decision was made to accept an affiliation that it would be brought in January. He also discussed the state funding process to SFA and all universities stating we are funded by a formula and noted we are asking the legislature for 140 million for deferred maintenance - facility needs, stem teacher preparation program, and other important student initiatives. Also noted we are working towards filling the Executive Director of Enrollment position, which was changed to a VP role to make it more competitive in the market.
	  ○ Dr. Lorenzo Smith spoke about the reorganization of the six library positions. He entertained questions about the high concern of misrepresentation in the Academic Affairs Policy Committee and recommended that if faculty felt they were not being heard, to send their concerns in writing directly to him.
	• Second Faculty Senate on October 12th with two speakers.
	  ○ Dr. Westbrook provided an update on the System Affiliation process and noted next steps. Voiced again there is still a plan for finding a long-term president once the system affiliation decisions have concluded. Asking for an additional 23.4 million for salary support as a special request to legislature.
	  ○ Dr. Smith addressed concerns regarding space utilization. Asked faculty to increase space utilization by teaching in assigned rooms. Recommended emailing John Calahan if space assignments were not meeting their needs.
	  ○ Senate discussed the rubrics used to narrow down and manage the responses from the system responses.
	c. Secretary – Meredith Baily
	• Attending food hall design meetings run by Omni Plan and Kirksey which are two different design firms functioning as one team in the build. Many levels of diverse group representation in the meetings to date. Discussions center around the goals for the facility in functionality and aesthetic. There have been two meetings. The first over the food hall, and second over the addition of what they termed a pavilion area which is more of an outside transitional space. Completion goal for Fall 2024 with work expected to start in a few months.
	d. T**reasurer – Travis Killen**
	• Budget allotment of $2k and during workshop spent just over $389 on food.
	e. Parliamentarian – Lissy Turner
	• No report at this time.

V. Committee Reports	**a. Executive Committee** • Met several times to discuss the system affiliation responses, to plan the Staff Council workshop, and to set the agenda for this meeting.

	b. Nominations & Elections Committee • No report at this time. **c. Communications Committee** • No report at this time. **d. Worklife Committee** • No report at this time. **e. Staff Recognition Committee** • Met three times, meeting again this week. Committee is requesting some changes to the format of the original proposal given to Dr. Westbrook. Tentative window for President Award nominations in December. More details coming once a final schedule is set. **f. Bylaws Committee** • No report at this time.
VI. Unfinished Business	a. **University system affiliation responses** • University system responses are now available at sfasu.edu/system. Condensed version of staff-specific questions and responses available on SC website under announcements. • Now tasked with developing a report that outlines the strengths and weaknesses of each system and what considerations should be taken into account as the Board of Regents make their decision. This will be a thirty-minute presentation on Sunday at the Board of Regents meeting on October 31. • Staff who want to provide feedback can do so through the University System Response Feedback Survey, by sharing feedback with a Staff Council representative, or by sharing feedback through the Staff Council's anonymous comment form. • The goal today is to discuss the feedback from staff and confirm that it represents all views. **Review of document built for feedback collected so far:** 

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Texas A&M	65	68	34
Texas State	27	102	36
Texas Tech	64	81	**39**
University of Texas	**113**	57	9
Total	269	308	118

Examples of feedback/comments received from staff to date:

University of Texas

- Professional proposal
- Thoughtful feedback
- Analysis done before responding
- Considered SFA's needs
- Responded the best
- Local (Staff Council) and system-level stakeholder groups (Employee Advisory Council)
- PUF allocations
- Promise Plus - SFA would receive at least $1 million annually to help relieve the financial burden of eligible students
- Salary analysis for faculty provided: Proposed increase of 5.5 million. Similar analysis of staff salaries noted

Texas A&M

- Positive cultural and academic alignment
- Did not present well
- Second best response
- Inconsistent responses
- Better benefits than SFA
- Current affiliations in place (RELLIS)
- A portion of SFA's operating reserves and endowments are already pooled for investment in A&M portfolios

Texas State

- Great fit
- Easiest transition
- Not enough clear financial backing

Texas Tech

- A lot to offer
- Will cost SFA more than it will gain
- Unclear fit for SFA culturally
- Leader & Culture Development program

Spotlight comparison of system relies on three leading topics:

Question #10: There is significant concern about the impact of system affiliation on job security. Please describe how you will address positions at SFA that overlap with positions at the system level (e.g., general counsel, Title IX, audit services, human resources) as well as positions that may be currently outsourced at other institutions affiliated with your system (e.g., financial aid verification, groundskeeping, custodial services, and skilled trades work).

Texas A&M	Texas State	Texas Tech	University of Texas
The A&M System Office offers many centralized shared services that take advantage of economies of scale and provide value-added expertise that would otherwise be too expensive to acquire and maintain by the members independently. SFA and the A&M System would work collaboratively over time to determine	System affiliation with TSUS will not have an impact on job security. Legal services, governmental relations, audit services, and certain business office functions will be transferred administratively to TSUS System Administration, but the employees will remain employed on campus.	To be clear, no jobs will be directly lost by joining the TTU System. Rather, SFA employees in roles within centralized areas will become members of the TTU System Administration team hierarchy while still retaining their physical presence and offices at SFA.	These are institutional decisions based on optimal use of resources at the institution. SFA would review its own needs after a potential affiliation and make these determinations. Outsourcing of any services is an institutional decision.

Question #11: In recent years, Hanover conducted salary studies for staff and faculty positions at SFA. (Detailed findings are available here and here; in short, most salaries at SFA are below average compared to peer institutions and market.) What specific actions will the system take to 1) close the gaps between SFA employee salaries and salaries at peer institutions and to 2) address salary equity, compression, and disparity concerns?

Texas A&M	Texas State	Texas Tech	University of Texas
The A&M System has led an interim study, under the guidance of the Board of Regents, on the issues affecting affordability and access to higher education in Texas, particularly at the	Competitive salaries and benefits, and the ability to recruit the best and the brightest are key attributes within TSUS. When an institution determines there is a need for material adjustment in the	Each university leadership team is authorized to establish faculty and staff compensation policies based on need and funds available within the institutional budget. The TTU System Administration can	As part of our own preliminary analysis of faculty compensation, we concur that SFA faculty compensation levels are below the averages of those at similar UT institutions, and we

	four-year institutions. In testimony before the **House Appropriations** Committee on September 9, Chancellor Sharp **outlined the need for increased investment in the core higher education funding formulas, beyond simply covering student enrollment growth** since the previous session. This base funding increase is critical to our ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff in this challenging economic environment. The A&M System is leading the charge, in partnership with the other systems, to **increase the base funding needed to support faculty and staff pay**. We also are working with the **Legislative Budget** Board to draw attention to the **need for our higher education employees to be considered as part of any statewide strategy to increase**	compensation structure, System Administration works with institutional leadership to devise a strategy to address compensation inequities. There is no singular, uniform solution to addressing these issues.	assist universities with additional guidance when needed.	believe an additional $5.5 million would be needed at SFA to bring faculty salaries and associated fringe benefits to that level. If SFA joined the UT System, we would consider it a priority to assist SFA in closing this gap over a short period of two to three years. We plan to undertake a similar analysis of SFA staff salaries.

state agency employee pay. In addition, we have called for the Legislature to close gaps in their commitment to support the Hazlewood legacy tuition exemption and the cost of Higher Education Group Insurance. All of these strategies would provide increased revenue available to address compensation and hiring levels for faculty and staff at SFA.			

Question #16: To what degree are member institutions allowed to maintain their traditions and unique identity? Will SFA keep its name, mascot, traditions, colors, logo, and ring? Would local traditions and/or institutional identifiers be expected to change over time?

Texas A&M	Texas State	Texas Tech	University of Texas
We have no desire and no intention to change SFA's name, its mascot, its colors, its school song, its traditions, its logos or its rings. We want your university to affiliate with us for your benefit and ours. It would be a mistake to change the values and traditions that make Stephen F. Austin University the unique institution that it is.	System Administration and the Board of Regents are not involved in the day-to-day brand development and institutional identity activities. TSUS prides itself on having diverse, non-homogenous institutions, with each controlling their own unique identity, mascot, traditions, colors, logo, and ring. We	Stephen F. Austin State University would preserve its proud name, mascot and colors as a member institution of the TTU System – just like Angelo State University has since joining the TTU System in 2007 and Midwestern State University has since becoming a member institution of the TTU System in 2021. The TTU System celebrates the	SFA's name, mascot, traditions, colors, logos, rings and all identifiers and traditions are time-honored and would be retained by the UT System. Decisions on university marks are made by the institution.

		do not merely accept the diversity of our institutions; we embrace and celebrate that diversity. Further, TSUS recommends the enabling legislation to join SFA to TSUS maintain a prohibition on a name change without legislative approval.	uniqueness of our universities with a shared passion for rich histories and traditions. No changes will be made to these respected and honored traditions.	

<u>Open the floor for comments:</u>

- Rep. Stringfield – A&M also had better leave structures.
- Rep. Morton – thought A&M responses were more thorough than others and it looked like they did their homework.
- Rep. Bryant – the University of Texas did a full-blown study on our brand.
- Rep. Morton – what is the possibility or guarantee of their answers matching what actually occurs after affiliation? Is it built into our MOU, etc.?
    - Chair Reed – it is my understanding there is a contract included as part of system affiliation that would address this.
- Rep. Morton – noted that A&M is the only system that addressed salary issues via legislature, providing a thorough understanding and a clear picture of potential limitations.
- Rep. Stringfield – UT has the largest share of PUF monies.
- Rep. Delaney – UT stated that an additional 5.5 million was needed but there was no offer to fix the deficit.
- Rep. C. Beavers – UT noted in a later section that they would commit to resolving the issue in 2-3 years.
- Rep. Bryant – PUF is typically used for capital funds and improvements. More interested in other areas of funding and support.
- Rep. C. Beavers – curious about the debt release budget.
- Chair-Elect Romero – agree with the PUF funding amounts, keep in mind that PUF is restricted. Noted the contrast with HEF, as well as other funds that are released for other initiatives, e.g., salary.
- Rep. Ajero – noted that some systems charge a membership fee, others offset the membership by noting savings. UT would not charge us.
- Secretary Baily – concerns around transition analysis and support for any transitions with timing

	• Rep. Coleman – consider what SFA wants to get from affiliation beyond finances. There are a lot of areas that need to be addressed on top of the financial, such as morale.
	• Heather Hawkins (proxy for Rep. Crenshaw) – admissions is a key item for each of these to help increase our numbers.
	• Rep. Kennedy – noted a recent rumor circulation about systems rescinding their offers. Need to address this.
	  ○ Chair Reed stated that there has been no confirmation of rescinded offers to date.
	• Rep. C. Beavers – have we talked about not joining a system? Although there are budgetary concerns, it is worth exploring what we lose if we join a system. Shouldn't we be considering the full impact? Joining a system does not guarantee those items being addressed.
	  ○ Chair Reed – clarified that this is part of the discussion. Our understanding is that the analysis begins with whether we should join a system and is it in the best interest of SFA to do so.
	• Rep. Ward – consider what systems can gain from being affiliated with us. Seemed like Texas A&M had a more specific response about what they were gaining. Beyond the conversation of salary, we all can admit we have been on a downhill spiral regarding management and finances. Any change is going to change the culture at SFA. There is a lot to combine and consider beyond finances.
	• Rep. Galatas – some constituents noticed A&M and UT provided specific responses related to marketing and branding. Noted that these were addressed by Texas State or Texas Tech. Also noted focusing on leave as well as the lack of thoroughness provided by Texas Tech and Texas State.
	• Rep. Coleman – do we know as an institution what we want to gain? We need to consider what areas need to be addressed and move forward with a plan to address them whether we go with a system or not.
	• Rep. Ward – it seemed like Dr. Westbrook noted this has been a question posed to SFA many times over the years and the answer was consistently "no" until this year. It makes you wonder what changed this year to change that. There are pros and cons to affiliation, but it seems there is more going on behind the scenes promoting review.
	• Rep. Coleman – there was a question we posed about some of our processes, which would be focused on here at the institution and which would migrate. Some of the software, the way we operate, etc. There are areas we want to maintain here but we need to consider the other things that could be better managed from a system-wide approach such as resources we could utilize. Noted that some changes may be beneficial (e.g., overarching decision-making) that allows us to put our time and funding into other important things.
	• Rep. Ward – important to try and help mitigate fear. Overall concern with autonomy. Surprised by how many answers noted that the decisions would remain with SFA.
	• Chair Reed – we strongly encourage everyone to read the responses for themselves to gain a better understanding of each system.
	• Rep. Bryant - Consideration is far more than salaries. We won't see positive change overnight. We must focus on having a sustainable institution. Noted leveraging

	assets and system-level brand recognition while also recognizing our debt (and limited growth ability) as examples of ways that SFA can benefit from affiliation. • Rep. Galatas – had comments about looking at the systems and their growth as part of the analysis. • Chair Reed – noted that several provided numbers in their responses. • Rep. Coleman – noted using caution as we cannot know how much growth occurred due to the system versus what occurred locally. • Chair- Elect Romero – not against or in favor of joining a system. Fact – we are starting at a point where we are in financial strain, but do we know that is a fact and that is why we are seeking affiliation? Many decisions are staying at the institutional level. Does this mean that leadership and decision-making will remain the same and therefore we are not going to see the changes expected occur? • Heather Hawkins (proxy for Rep. Crenshaw) – our biggest asset and detriment is our location and having one of the bigger groups (and their brand recognition) would allow us to draw more students. • Rep. Ward – it is great that a lot of question noted decisions remaining at an institutional level, but there is also concern that this means that some things won't change. The hope is that having a wider system perspective will encourage SFA to take initiative and align with system salaries. • Treasurer Killen – tagging onto the changes the university will bring and the changes overall. With the I-69 corridor coming through town, that will impact SFA and Nacogdoches regardless of a system affiliation. • Rep. C. Beavers – there is always a lot of talk on our campus about enrollment. Although we want to keep growing, we sometimes forget that we are a great institution of 12,000 students. That is an important recognition. We throw a lot at growing our enrollment which may cause the students here to not get enough due to that shift in focus. Impossible to know what these institutions are going to do for us. • Rep. Bryant – the challenge is that we are falling behind and there are no more resources. We don't have the ability to move forward because of how far we've fallen behind. If we don't continue to invest and grow, then we will fall too far behind. We have to focus on sustainability. • Rep. Morton – sometimes it is difficult for an institution to make cuts in some areas and not others, which is why it may be helpful to have a different perspective. What we are offering our students is unacceptable, and we need to have leadership in place that will make the tough decisions and make investments in the areas that matter. • Secretary Baily – focus on what adjustments will be made and benefits brought in. We don't want to see cuts in positions, but we do want less of a fear culture. • Rep. C Beavers – we are falling behind drastically, agreed, and we are not offering our students the best opportunities. What can the system give us to benefit our students other than growth? • Rep. Ajero – maybe we need an external force to make some changes, but we should be confident in our own capability. Some changes won't be what we want, and changes won't happen overnight, but we should be confident in our ability to communicate with these systems if there are some areas of struggle. Perhaps negotiations on what is best for SFA will be possible.

	• Rep. Kennedy – we need better facilities to retain/attract new students, but we also need to increase our ability to recruit new staff and faculty. There are posted positions that applicants won't apply for. • Rep. Ward – As a Staff Council representative on campus, it is up to us to lead the charge for managing our expectations when it comes to affiliation. The ideas are great, but it takes a considerable amount of adaptability, and no big change is going to happen without turbulent waters. • Rep. Ajero – we should have confidence in ourselves in adapting with the changes together. We are trying to make SFA attractive, but the current faculty and staff are important – we need to consider retention there and how to keep and support current staff. • Rep. Beck – clarifying question – is our goal today to list/discuss the pros and cons of the four systems, and what we want to communicate to the Board of Regents? • Chair Reed – Yes. That is our goal today. I believe we've had a good bit of conversation regarding considerations so far. Reminder to fill out the form for additional feedback. Note there is not a requirement to answer each – you can pick which items to respond to. The presentation materials shared today as well as the presentation to the Board of Regents will be sent to Staff Council representatives once completed. • Rep. Coleman – will there be qualitative data behind the presentation as to how many had the same opinion? ○ Chair Reed – I will not be giving a line-item report – it will be a presentation summary to the Board of Regents. • Rep. Morton – I think the conversation today noted that there were a clear two that were stronger (Texas A&M and University of Texas), and two that were weaker (Texas State and Texas Tech) based on their responses. • Rep. Morton – I thought the A&M benefits were exceptional. • Rep. C. Beavers – it was impressive how A&M addressed the employee benefits alignment as well as their focus on aligning to State of Texas employee pay. • Rep. Bryant – endowment was the largest with A&M. • Rep. Ward – surprised by the amount of detail and content provided by A&M which was also a lot to read. The UT response in comparison was not as specific or strong but was short and to the point. • Rep. Delaney – noted that all of the systems stated that we could keep our name, etc., but on the list of UT schools they are all listed as locations (e.g., University of Texas Tyler). • Rep. Galatas – don't think they have ever taken over / Rep. Stringfield noted UT Tyler was a takeover / Rep. C. Beavers – I think they have always been UT Tyler. • Rep. Keller – A&M gave the most information regarding retirement eligibility and what that transition would look like. • Chair Reed – current understanding is that the other systems had the same retirement as SFA – A&M was the only one that was different. b. **Bylaws amendments** • Voted to include 2 new standing bodies in the last meeting: standing body for bylaws and a standing committee for staff recognition. Verbiage for both was added

	to the bylaws and reviewed for edits/changes. Motion by Rep. Beck to accept all bylaws edits as written. Seconded by Rep. Ward. Motion passed unanimously.
VIII. New Business	a. **University Calendar Committee feedback** • Proposing two possible changes. Rep. Beck noted that the committee met on Friday with feedback from across campus and the decision was to stay with the same start term, and to keep the full week for (faculty/student) break. Noted that students wanted to break the holiday up, but the other bodies did not.
IX. Adjournment	Motion to Adjourn: Rep. Ward Seconded by Rep. Beck Unanimously Approved Adjourn Time: 11:25 a.m.