

**Stephen F. Austin State University
Staff Council Meeting Notes
Monday, December 12, 2022
10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
McGee Business Building (Room 133) and Zoom**

Attendees:

Attending Representatives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair: Alison Reed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair-Elect: Grace Romero <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parliamentarian: Lissy Turner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treasurer: Travis Killen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secretary - Meredith Baily <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gina Ajero <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carrie Baker <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Courtney Beavers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Veronica Beavers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brittany Beck <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharon Brewer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Choya Coleman <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Surry Consford <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Crenshaw <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sabrina Delaney <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Galatas <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Angela Harless <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emily Keller <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agatha Moreland <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jordan Riley <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ashley Ward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ken Morton <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amanda Kennedy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brandon Stringfield
Not Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Veronica Herrera <input type="checkbox"/> Nadia Sifuentes

Meeting Minutes

Topic	Minutes
I. Call to Order	Time: 10:02 a.m.
II. Roll Call	Secretary Baily called roll. Individuals noted above were in attendance.
III. Presentations	<p>a. Dr. Steve Westbrook, Interim President Topics: System affiliation, FY23 compensation increases, presidential search</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enabling Legislation - Working on the enabling legislation that will make all of this [system affiliation] official. Dr. Westbrook traveling to Austin for transition conversations and preparations. Very little change is anticipated. ○ Presidential Search - President placement will begin soon which was anticipated regardless of affiliation. Anticipates that affiliation will enhance the applicant pool. This will be a great thing for the University. As soon as a long-term leader is in place the better it is for the University. Dr. Westbrook does not intend to make long-term strategic changes, as he will be leaving on May 31. This will be the role of the new President. Noted strategic plan is up for renewal, expiring in 2023. • Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase in institutional enhancement money. The system has agreed to supply 5.5 million dollars each year for the next 4 years but that will then need to be funded from elsewhere. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We do expect savings from joining the system. ○ Legislation Requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Noted SFA submitting legislative appropriation requests this session separate from the system, which are re practical for our long-term goals. One is the institutional enhancement special item used for salaries ongoing.

- Requested around 22 million over a two-year period.
- Requested 130 million dollars for capital renewal and campus modernization. The primary piece is the removal/replacement of Miller Science and Kennedy auditorium. Cost to renovate these buildings would be about 63.5 million dollars. 30 million from these funds would be used for deferred maintenance on other facilities. We have buildings around campus that need significant work or replacement. Noted Austin and Rusk buildings, campus infrastructure, wayfinding, streets, etc.
- **PUF Funding** - One of the benefits of joining the University of Texas (U.T.) system is being supported by the Permanent University Fund (PUF) – we do not currently have access to this fund.
 - Only a few institutions have access to funding from PUF.
 - PUF is funded off revenues that come from 2.1 million acres of land in west Texas. The State set aside this land to fund the PUF.
 - Oil now generates the revenue for PUF, which is split by U.T. (2/3 of the revenue) and A&M (1/3 revenue). The Texas system share is about 47 billion dollars, which throws off revenue that is then shared with member institutions.
 - Institutional allocations for funding are based on a formula which is standard for institutions in the UT system.
- **Capital Funding** - As part of the system structure, we receive capital funding.
 - In this round the intent is 80 million dollars of capital funding.
 - 45 million will be for projects of the institutions' decision.
 - The balance of that will be for Forestry and Agriculture. Noted identified needs in Forestry and Ag. Part of the funding we received from the State last session was (about 45 million) intended to be used to renovate or expand the Forestry building, replace labs, Ag, Ag mechanics, and do some work out at the farm. This will now allow us to supplement that and allow us to do even more.
- Being part of the PUF system, SFA will no longer receive HEF funding. Confident that SFA will receive more funding as part of a PUF structure.
- Discussed LERR and STARs funding. STARs funding is used by the U.T. System to help recruit faculty. Provides funding relative to specific disciplines (e.g., lab equipment). Funding helps recruit and support outstanding faculty members.
- Additional sources of funding noted as operating expenses will be reduced as the system picks up certain expenses (e.g., insurance or IT costs) Some IT savings would require shifting to system provided platforms. Noted transitioning to new systems is not required. These would be at SFA's discretion. Example of shifting from Banner to PeopleSoft provided. Noted costs involved with such a transition.
- **Presidential Search**
 - At the November Board of Regents meeting, the Board suspended their rules for presidential selection. The University of Texas system will conduct the presidential search and will determine who sits on the Presidential

Selection Advisory Committee. Link to [presidential search rules](#) is on the website.

- The majority sitting on the committee are local. Either the Chancellor or the Vice Chancellor will chair the committee. Two presidents from other system institutions will also be on the committee.
- There will be representatives from SFA groups including:
 - 1 staff member (selected by Staff Council)
 - 3 faculty members (selected by Faculty Senate) Two will have to hold a rank of Associate Professor or higher
 - 1 dean (selected by the Deans Council)
 - President of the Alumni Association
 - 2 members of the community (referred to as “external supporters of the institution”)
 - 2 members from our current Board of Regents
- Very likely that the announcement for President selection will be announced by our current Board, as enabling legislation that changes the governance will not have taken effect yet. The U.T. system will make a recommendation to our Board and our Board will hire them.
- U.T. system typically does not use a search firm
- **Transition** – these will be nuanced changes.
 - Will eventually need to align SFA policies with those of U.T. Noted that most of SFA’s policies already align. Some may require adjustment.
 - SFA will now have access to system communities for assistance. This will be a transition. Noted connecting with communities of practice and becoming part of a larger group that deals with similar situations.
 - Looking forward to this and to having the new president. This all moves us into the future.
- **Compensation**
 - With the U.T. financial commitment (starting in FY 2024 to 2027), SFA can now utilize institution reserves. Reluctant to do so in the past without support.
 - Board asked Dr. Westbrook to bring a compensation plan to propose to the Board in January. This is still in progress, no details yet. Proposal will include staff and faculty.
 - Increase noted as stage 1 of several.
 - The increase is not intended as one-time monies. Intended to be carried on over the next year or two.
 - Intended to be implemented this spring.
 - New President will inherit the decisions made now and will be involved in the FY2024 budget.
 - Dr. Westbrook will submit a proposal to the Board this January and that provides the basis for what the new president does going forward.
- **Q&A**
 - Chair Reed – Thank you to you and the staff involved for their time and investment in this effort. Specific questions received from multiple staff members. One big question was about salary grade ranges and how they are dated (2012). If increases are being based on those numbers, is there

consideration that these might be addressed before those calculations are made?

- Dr. Westbrook – No, they won't be addressed before the calculations are made because we want to move faster. Salary grade adjustments will take time, and the system will assist us with this. Noted moving quickly for the first round, and not overcomplicating what we do now. Noted that salary range updates are important and need to be addressed, but that addressing this now would not allow for this first stage to be effective by spring.
- Representative Harless - What about new employees? Will this apply to them as well? Is there a timeline on how long you have to work here in order for this to affect you?
 - Dr. Westbrook – not sure yet. I hope not. We want to raise across the board. Importance of addressing this with everybody. Raise the base and then build on top of that. Provided an example of merit-based increases, and how this doesn't serve everybody.
 - This would be an across-the-board increase of some type. It is meant to impact cost of living base increase.
 - Fastest, simplest, and quickest to deploy.
- Representative Morton – if all goes to plan then what is the effective date of certain transitions (e.g., insurance changes) and when does that take effect?
 - Dr. Westbrook – we haven't gone granular at this level yet. Could take effect next fiscal year. How long it takes to shift over will vary based on what we are shifting to. It will be a multi-year transitioning process.
- Representative Crenshaw – you mentioned in some ways the Provost would be meeting with the other Provosts and the President would be meeting with other Presidents. It is encouraging to hear that we will have resources outside of our university based on best practices. Do you see that being available for other offices, and in what ways can we prepare for collaboration with other schools?
 - Dr. Westbrook – It is still early in that process, and we need to work through all these elements.
 - Some collaboration will be more obvious, but we will begin to find connections with others that are operating under a common umbrella.
 - Receiving questions about existing communities of practice that are already out there (e.g., IT)
 - Will investigate what formalized groups exists and will work to engage our people in those as we know more.
- Treasurer Romero – Had several constituents reach out with concerns. They want to know whether staff that have unofficially taken over extra responsibilities and additional roles - if they are going to be considered differently or the same in the salary increase. Will there be a remedy for these circumstances and will these employees be considered in the same pool for salary increases.

- Dr. Westbrook – This initial round is likely to be an across-the-board lift. Next president will need to build on top of this, which will take time.
- Treasurer Romero – being understaffed is an issue. Many departments are understaffed and have been for some time. Will staff workload be addressed during the transition?
 - Dr. Westbrook – Maybe. This is something we need to take into consideration. Reimplementing funding for lost positions will remove funding for compensation. A 1% increase costs 1 million dollars.
 - An objective evaluation will need to be done to consider how we prioritize bringing positions back. This will take time.
 - Will be part of FY2024 budget which will fall under the new president.
 - If SFA does work on this in advance, this may help expedite the process.
 - Reiterated that we will gain resources when U.T. takes on some of our operating systems, which will free up capital that can be used for some of the things we’re talking about.
- Secretary Baily – who will be making these decisions? If we’re looking at an allocation of where these funds go such as midpoint whether it be based on salaries or midpoints based on 10-year-old data or the challenges where some positions really do need to be filled in order to help with a work balance. Who are having those conversations and making those decisions and how are those happening to be inclusive of all these groups and differing perspectives so that a more informed decision can be made around where these funds go?
 - Dr. Westbrook, VPFA, and Cabinet will be visiting about this. Goal is to keep it simple and move quickly. We are going to lift all to a certain level. What that will address in some way is the goal to come closer to midpoint, and midpoint needs to be adjusted but we can’t do it all at once.
 - Trying to avoid saddling the next president with something that hinders their future actions or decisions. One-time money increase had this in mind. Salary increases discussed today will be added to the base salary.
 - Comfortable making these changes now as SFA will have system support to help cover these salary adjustments.
- Representative Ajero – this sounds like a percent across the board is the fastest way. Concern regarding the range of base salaries. Across the board raises will only worsen the gap between salaries. Has administration considered the gaps this will continue to create?
 - Dr. Westbrook – don’t have a great answer on that. Even though there are higher salaries they are still below market. The only way you converge on the mean is to give a flat amount to everybody, but that doesn’t address the true issue.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The plan in place won't allow us to "get there" [where salaries need to be], we still have work to do on top of this, but it will get us closer. ○ Chair Reed – coming back to the affiliation piece. The system proposal specifically notes 5.5 million in funding to address faculty salaries. Many staff are asking, how is administration communicating with the systems on championing for staff salaries as well? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Westbrook – there is more in the rest of the statement provided. Faculty is easily assessed, and they were able to attribute a number. It will take longer to do the staff assessment, as equivalents are not exact. U.T. came forward with what they could identify and are eager to address staff salaries as well. ▪ U.T. is not leaving staff out. They could not quickly identify a gap because of the unique positions and differences, which make it difficult to directly match positions/salaries. ○ Representative Riley – could you give us a ballpark of when we will receive the salary increase? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Westbrook – my intent and hope is for Spring. ○ Chair Reed – To clarify, the next step is that Dr. Westbrook is working on the package for this proposal and will present it to the Board in January. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Westbrook – Correct, and the board has been receptive. It became obvious in our assessment there was a value to joining a system and the last piece was the financial piece. ○ Representative Harless– are these adjustments going to meet cost of living? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Westbrook – it depends on which numbers you look at. Is it enough to cover every cost of living over the last three years? Probably not. Based on what's available to us and what is a prudent use of the reserves. ○ Treasurer Killen – have you earmarked a certain percentage or dollar amount of the reserve funds to be used for this process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Westbrook - Not yet.
<p>IV. Meeting Minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion by Representative Beck • Seconded by Representative Morton • Approved with no oppositions or abstentions
<p>V. Officer Reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chair – Alison Reed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • succeed my time as it was tied to Dr. Westbrook's presentation today. b. Chair-Elect – Grace Romero <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Senate – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Westbrook went over the same process and next steps for system affiliation. Noting legislative session opens January 10, 2023. ○ Dr. Smith recognized how well the affiliation process went and the good work of the Board, specifically how open they have been to faculty considerations. Asked faculty to be cautious in their salary requests as the system will have expectations for a return on this investment. ○ Stated the proposal for the ombudsman did not pass with the chairs and deans, noting that UT does have an ombudsman office not only for faculty but for staff as well.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Looking at proposals for Academic Affairs for the budget and hoping with the help from the system it will be affected. c. Secretary – Meredith Baily <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nothing to report d. Treasurer – Travis Killen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nothing to report e. Parliamentarian – Lissy Turner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New bylaws are live in teams ready for approvals
VI. Committee Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Executive Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Met to set the agenda for today and wrote talking points for today. b. Nominations & Elections Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nothing to report c. Communications Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Been working on a button for all staff council members and should have those in the New Year. d. Worklife Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Informal translation network is still in process. General Counsel approved and noted HR would need a handbook or training page for volunteers. Need a simple disclaimer regarding the translation being informal. John Wyatt committed to working with General Counsel to create the documentation. e. Staff Recognition Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 114 nominations (as of today) for the President’s Achievement Award. Sending out a last push for submissions. Will then gather the data, send it through to HR for confirmation of eligibility, and then to Dr. Westbrook for selection. f. Bylaws Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nothing to report.
VII. Unfinished Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Staff equity and merit policies – Chair Reed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worklife committee is currently reviewing policies and processes. Members met with Alisha Collins in the Budget Office to discuss current procedures. Will then speak with HR regarding current policies. Goal is to provide a thorough and accurate report.
IX. Adjournment	<p>Adjourn Time: 11:15 p.m. Motion to adjourn by Representative Beck Seconded by Representative Kennedy Approved with no oppositions or abstentions</p>