

**2017-2018 Staff Senate Meeting Minutes**  
**October 09, 2017 9:30 – 11:30AM Edinburg**  
ITT Building – International & Trade Building, Room 1.102  
(WebEx Locations in Brownsville and Harlingen)

Minutes prepared by Monica Tovar, Staff Senate Secretary

- I. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 9:35 AM, Staff Senate Secretary, Monica Tovar, took attendance. Quorum was established.

II. **Establishment of Quorum**

**Senators Present:** David Marquez, Peter James Ehimika, Monica Tovar, Lisa Smith, Diana Ocanas, Michael Aldape, Leslie Jones, Lisa Pena, Jamie Zambrano, LanLan Alvarado, Rebekah Sepulveda, Jesus Buitron, Krystal Marroquin, Dalyn Ruiz, Roberto Castro, Silverio Nieto, Roberto Cantu

**Visitors:** Dr. Cynthia Brown- Deputy Provost, Mike James – Chief Human Resources Officer

- III. Approval of Minutes: Rebekah Sepulveda – Motioned to approve; Krystal Marroquin– 2<sup>nd</sup> Motion

IV. New Business

- a. **Soft Hiring Freeze Guidelines** - Mike James Chief Human Resources Officer, Doug Arney, Assistant VP for Public Art & Special Projects: Mike James explained Soft Hiring Freeze Salary Savings in order to create a University Savings that could possibly used for Merit Program. (See Attachment)

To fill position, approval is needed for those seen as critical positions. With these guidelines, departments and leaders have an opportunity to evaluate their organization. You can post the position, but will not be able to fill the position for 3 months. Student facing positions it is 2 months, until you fulfill the savings. Again, there are some exemptions, for mission critical areas. This is effective September 1, and the calendar starts when a position is vacated. Some student positions need to be vacant for 2 months. Planning & Analysis is working on a list of positions that are student facing areas.

**Questions:** Rebekah Sepulveda asked why 6 months, for chronic vacant positions. Mike James explained that those positions allow the departments to evaluate if the positions are still needed.

Roberto Cantu asked if there was already a Merit Program for UTRGV, this not yet established, but it is an example of something can create with the funds as per Mike James.

David Marquez asked if there are other institutions with merit program already established. Mike James explained that some do, but the availability does vary by year.

- b. SACSCOC Updates** Cynthia Brown – began with a brief history of the establishment and transition of previous University Institutions and of UTRGV, which lead up to the SACSCOS, probation violations, and explained the corrections that have been made to address the issues. Rebekah asked about the results of the Mock SACSCOC visit. They selected a team that was similar to the SACSCOC Committee that will be visiting. They provided feedback, and it will serve as consultants through the whole process. Michael Aldape asked if those that will be participating in the visit, have been contacted. Interviewees will be contacted by tomorrow morning.

Visit October 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>

**c. Noteworthy Announcements - All Senators**

- Veronica De La Garza announced GearUp received seven-year grant for \$21.2 million intended to continue guiding at-risk students in the area toward a college education.
- Veronica also reported, tomorrow is the last day to register to vote. We have about 17,000 students registered. Early voting will be in Edinburg and Harlingen.
- HR: Healthy Trails – still have time to sign up.
- SECC is going on now to the end of October. If you do not know who your SECC Rep is you can reach out to HR to find the rep for your division.
- Leslie Jones – starting next month the UTRGV Learning Center will be bringing 3D-VR technology developed by zSpace to the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses in late fall of 2017. Upon installation and training, there will be an orientation for faculty, staff, and students so they can come and experience the 3D-VR technology first hand. Technology is already revolutionizing learning and has the potential to revolutionize teaching as well. The Learning Center will play its part in providing the technology as an enhanced learning tool for students. The apps included are primarily STEM related, but it is likely that in the near future the Learning Center will be highlighting additional technological resources that foster learning in other disciplines. They have departments such as the PA department wants to participate with anatomy software similar to what the medical school uses.
- Robert Cantu – The bookstore is now collecting textbook adoption lists.
- Parking enforcement will be implemented, on other campuses and buildings.

**Questions:** Monica Tovar asked about the Harlingen Campus and they have not started enforcement in Harlingen due to staffing. Dalyn Ruiz asked about lights not working in the new parking lot in Brownsville; they are now turned on and working.

- Transportation of students have increased and 5 new shuttles will be delivered and ready for the Spring Semester. The need has growing
- Michael Aldape wanted to thank everyone involved and that helped with HESTEC. It was very successful event.

**V. Committee Reports - (PJ Ehimika reviewed the committee list for anyone that wants to change) All committees will delivery updates on their most recent meeting(s) and announce their selected Chair and Co-Chair.**

- i. **Business Processes and Procedures** – Monica reported that they have not yet selected a chair.
- ii. **Communications** - One Institution, One Voice – no chair selected at this time. Veronica, added items on Facebook. Lisa Smith asked, if the Staff Senate meetings can added to the Messenger.
- iii. **Constitution and Elections** – \*Rebekah is Chair, \*\*Michael is Co-Chair, Meet 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the Month and review the constitution before next meeting.
- iv. **Professional Development** –\*David is Chair, will meet once a month. Discussed Leadership Classes with HR, and looking to improve them, along with the Staff Tuition Assistance Program. They are doing a survey with other peer institutions. Michael did add that EAC is focusing on the same efforts and could maybe collaborate.
- v. **Staff Relations, Retention and Morale** – Nominated as Chairs: Cynthia Farris and Leslie; discussed the email from Lisa Smith. LanLan voiced that a chair needs to be selected 1<sup>st</sup> before addressing issues.
- vi. **University Development and Events** - Veronica De La Garza explained that there is a upcoming meeting planned

#### VI. Public Comments & Questions –

Rosemary Rodriguez in Harlingen asked who can attend the subcommittee meetings. It was reported that public (UTRGV Staff) are allowed to attend committee meetings.

PJ stopped by the UT System Office in DC and picked up brochures for the Archer Program. He passed them out and encouraged staff to give them to students who might be interested in an internship in Washington, D.C. Veronica De La Garza also added these internships are not just for those interested in Politics. It is open to all programs for students to participate. Dalyn Ruiz sked if the students have to be American Citizens or is it okay if the Student has a VISA. Veronica also added that as long as a student is enrolled in UTRGV then they can apply. <http://www.archercenter.org/>

#### VII. Pending Items - There are no pending items.

**Discussion:** Meeting locations, announcements, how can we get more participants? David suggested a challenge to all Senators to bring a person from your divisions. Update on the Website, once it is updated it can used to announce upcoming meetings. Michael suggested maybe a quick message with a summary could be added.

The group asked about other ways to reach more participants have been consider such as WEBEX; Lisa Smith mentioned that WebEx did not work for questions. Live meetings allowed questions to be heard without fear for having a VP or Administrator listening and seeing who asked the questions.

**Motions:** Motion to adjourn Staff Senate Meeting - Veronica De La Garza  
Robert Cantu 2<sup>nd</sup> motion to adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM