The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley™

Minutes of the Staff Senate
November 14, 2019, 9:30 – 11:30AM
HECBL Auditorium 1.100/ [Zoom Recording Link](#)

I. Call to Order at 9:33 AM by Rebekah Sepulveda, Staff Senate President

II. Establishment of Quorum - Roll call was completed by Monica Tovar, Staff Senate Secretary
**ZOOM is offered for this meeting, senators & staff were able to participate remotely

Staff Senate Sentaros Present: Noelyn Llasos, Isabel Saldana, Tammy Munoz, Cordelia Rasa, Peter James Ehimika, Nicolas H Dubberly, Valerie Johnson, Milagro (Millie) Hernandez, Yadira Mejia, Nicole Englitsch, Jocelyn Foster, Irene Cardenas, Karen Dorado, Maria Juarez-Serna, Matthew Pollock, Rebekah Sepulveda, Carla Renee Lopez, Veronica De La Garza, Yvette C. Padilla, Teresa Villarreal, David Torres, Monica Lisa Tovar, Alisha Michele Puentes

III. Approval of Minutes – No minutes to approve this meeting.

IV. New Business
a. Sustainability - Mr. Forrest Sparks & Sustainability Fellows

Food Insecurity project as well as a greenhouse gas emissions project. These are really presentations. These are proposals, the students have conducted research to take a look at these problems that we have on campus and the opportunities that we as staff, students and faculty have to correct those problems. These are problems that are relative to sustainable development on our campus in the community. It will allow us, as we move forward and start to resolve these problems to be a model for our community on how to resolve issues that are relative to sustainable development.

Forest Sparks is the one who leads our sustainability fellows. He is a part time professional staff member for the office for sustainability. So please, welcome for Mr. Sparks and our sustainability fellows. We're working on a food insecurity project right now.

FOOD INSECURITY INITIATIVE from the Office of Sustainability

We're working on a food insecurity project right now and we've been using a process called human centered design. In order to better understand the problem, human centered design is a creative problem-solving process. It takes a problem that sometimes ambiguous, and it starts by researching and understanding the people in empathizing with those that face the problem. With those insights were able to better define what specifically, the problem is, move into it, eating and come up with prototypes. We may test them and come up with solutions that are very close to the problems at hand.

Shreya Udawant: I'm a sustainability fellow for this year and today we are going to talk on the full In security initiative project which is part of the Zero Hunger. This is the most important UN Sustainable Goal which aims to make to end poverty and to make our life and to make the people more sustainable and to make people more secure and to make this more sustainable for life. In our presentation, we are going to see the research, findings and next steps. You will see how conducted our recent experiment, how we conducted the results and how we concluded our findings into the statistical formats. We are also going to talk on the next steps that are going to take for this project.

 Food Insecurity, as per the USDA the food insecurity is the lack of continuous in a food for living and active, healthy life. It also refers to a lack of financial resources for food at the household level. According to the survey national and international students, they have taken the survey and about 40% of the students are food insecure.
As our university comes in the most economical disadvantage in the state of Texas. So we have a higher probability of foreign security as 90% of our students are local students.

In our research, we actually conducted two-man experts that was like population and resources. In population we took surveys and interviews, and we considered on campus resources as well as the off-campus resources. So, in the population, we conducted a survey that was IRB approved survey in that 2,794 students surveyed that is 10% of the total student population till now we have taken eight interviews of the full insecure students.

We looked at the external resources. We contacted to the **BSN**, Baptist Student Ministry. We took a lot of interviews, and we learned about them. We learned about what their strategies are to serve the students, and how they feed students free and all the things that can help for our project. We contacted the other institutions about our research and how we can implement their models which they are serving and what they are doing to overcome the food insecurity in their own campuses.

Mr. Jeffrey Aquino Gomez, I'm a graduate student from the Biology Department, also Sustainability Fellow from the Spring 2019 Co-Hort.

Let's talk about numbers, how we better understand food insecurity. Well it's not a survey that we create, it's a survey created, validated and standardized with the United States Department of Agriculture. This survey was provided to our students through the instructors. They we were shared with them the ones that would like to participate. As Shreya mentioned, we have a participation of close of 2800 participants, which is close to 10% a little bit over a 10% making this sample representatives statistically

This revealed: **44.2% of the participants are food insecure in our university.** When we take a deeper look of the distribution this is how it looks: we observe that Juniors & Seniors and graduate students were the most participation.

Student Classification: Graduate Students: 19.8 %, Seniors 24.7%, Juniors 23.1%, Sophomores 14%, Freshman 18.5%

When we go closer, this is the distribution per year of studies that are food insecure. Here we see that sophomores, juniors and seniors are the students who participated that are more food insecure in UTRGV. From all the participants, roughly those 2,800 participants that took the survey, we do have resources to help fight food insecurity, such as the food pantry. From those roughly 2,800 participants **4**4.4% of students are not aware of the Food Pantry. From the participants admit that they know there is a food pantry and 18.2% of the students use our services. So we just think, in general, what about those people that actually are food insecure. So here's the data:

Food Pantry: Food Insecure Population
- 46.1% of Food Insecure students are not aware of the food pantry
- 29.6% of Food Insecure students are using the food pantry

Of those 29%, Average Use of the Food Pantry per Semester by Food Insecure Students:
- 18.6% Weekly
- 11% - Every other week

Mauricio Pena, Sustainability Fellow

Food Pantry Barriers:
- Time/Schedule
- Shame/Stigma
- Parking
- Awareness

Suggestions from the students came from the interviews, and one perception that that we found is that were some barriers with the usage of the resources such as the food pantry. Conflicts that included the schedules, they were the time that the students go to class, they must work, and how it conflicts with the operating hours of the food pantry, were some of the reasons they couldn't get the use of it. I'm going to mention the stigma that the students are facing shameful feelings about using the food pantry, the parking and awareness.

Some other suggestions that the students made on availability. They wanted to have a different location throughout the campus where they can pick up the food from the food pantry, extended hours since they cannot use it the food pantry due to conflicts with class or working. The students suggested that they should extend the hours either in the evenings or in the mornings.

There were a lot of suggestions about parking. A lot of people are not using the food pantry due that it's hard to find a parking spot and also they have to walk a long distance, and it will be like a really helpful to have a parking spot specifically for the usage of the food pantry; also suggestions about accessibility. There's not a lot of food options throughout the campus that are healthy. So they were suggesting to have other healthy and more affordable options of prepared food throughout the campus.

Marketing and awareness: this is a good one. This is where professors could be really, helpful by including it on the syllabus. Including a list of the resources for the people that are facing food insecurity could make use of these resources, as well as throughout the semester. If they can mention it and bring awareness of events that could happen on campus.

He shared the interviews and the perceptions that they directly had with the food insecure students. When the students really needed, they are ashamed. These are direct quotations from students, and I'm going to read some, of their statements.

Perceptions: "It was hard to go back to the food pantry because it does not have it does have that negative stereotype that you're using it because you need it and you are poor, and you suck."

This is actually what the students said. This is just a taste of what they are feeling. When they needed the most, they don't use it due to the stigma that negative stigma that we want to get rid of. However, we did have a positive perception we are normalizing the usage of these resources for food insecure people who can combat the stigma.

Perceptions: Normalizing it defeats a stigma
"When people opened up about their experiences, I didn't feel like I was the only one that needed food…"

Here a student was feeling shameful about using the food pantry and now that this person realizes that other people who are using it. There's another petition from another student when people open up about the experiences, I didn't feel like I was the only one that needed food. So this student was feeling shameful about using the food pantry button. Now that the that this person realize that other people were using it. That person didn't feel alone. So other people are using, and it is okay to use it. It is normal to use it.

Forrest, stated a person did mention that after knowing about this this started using more of this type of resources.

How can you help? Faculty can mention it 1x or 2x a semester. There are few choices in Brownsville and few healthy choices at a low cost.
Next steps include prototyping unique models. Working with campus resources to guide students in need to the resources and expanding their programs like the food pantry, community garden, BSM and others.

Question: Where is the food pantry on each campus?
Edinburg, west side near dining hall. University Center by the Chapel.
Students just don't know where it is. Brownsville, it is in the Cortez Building on the TSC Side.

Staff Senator, Tammy mentioned this as a barrier, it is on the TSC Side and too far to walk.
Both food pantries are close to the Veteran's Service Buildings.

Staff Senator, Peter James Ehimika added there is also a reason to place them in places where they are tucked away.
Forrest added that is a struggle to find a balance. We are trying to find a balance between how you normalize it and make it for people to know that it is there, as well as provide some level of confidentiality. We have also though about putting in different places, for instances, the library idea where you can pick up your food and there's advertisements, where you can go pick up the bag rather then going to the food pantry.

Staff Senator, Maria Juarez-Serna asked are there requirements to be eligible for the food pantry.
Are there requirements for students to access?

- Student ID, you need to be enrolled at UTRGV full-time
- You have to fill out a form with questions about your annual income for documentation purposes

Question: Comment added, as an advisor, it might be helpful for us to share this information. We just started pushing this semester with Freshman. The more one and one communications we can get the better. It will help normalize it.

Marketing & Communications added: We have a 'Humans of UTRGV' page, it's influenced by Human's of New York, it's a good way to even do some sustainability series to share those stories and it's an awesome way to create awareness and you can hyperlink, where the food pantry is

2nd project: Green House Gases Emission Inventory
Diego Lopez*, Monica Garcia, Christian Flores Advisors: Dr. Maysam Pourmik, Dr. Jongmin Kim
By Building Square footage we are very high, but by population by person we are lower than most institutions. Today we will be sharing the research on what our greenhouse emissions were and how they created an inventory of our footprint from 2015-2019 to create a baseline for UTRGV for Greenhouse Emissions. They will also review some of the recommendations of how to move forward so that we can begin to reduce our carbon footprint or greenhouse gas emissions as an institution and become a model in our community. The Greenhouse inventory consisted of three scopes: Scope 1) vehicle fleet, on-campus stationary, agriculture/fertilizer, other direct emissions 2) purchased electricity and 3) Commuting (Staff, faculty, student), directly financed/study abroad, Waste/wastewater, paper, other direct emissions. Greenhouse gasses are caused when fossil fuels burn it creates emissions, carbon dioxide, and that causes greenhouse gases to increase the temperature within an area leading to global warming.

For the methodology that we use, we just collected the receipts that the university have. Everything that they have paid out for the fiscal year 16-17 and '18
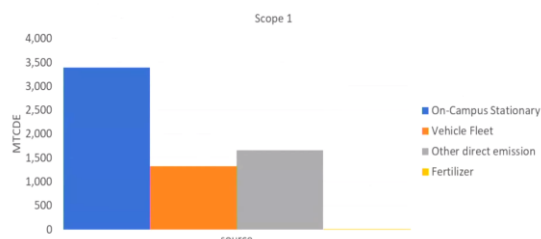
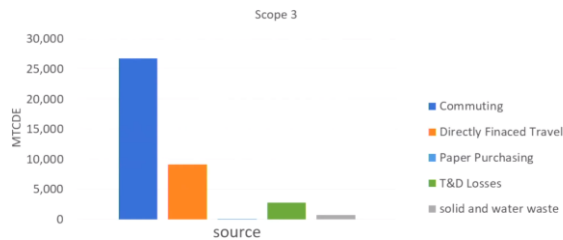**Scope 1: On- Campus Stationary was the largest group, natural gas that the university uses**
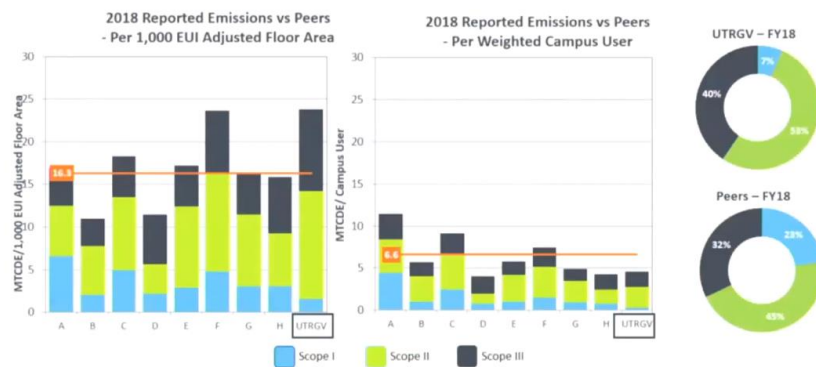
Scope 2: Purchased Electricity was the largest group

Results GHG- Scope 3

Scope 3- Community students, the university has a lot of students that commutes to class. It was around 27,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalences. Also, a lot of students that travel to conferences.

Results - Overview

Top three largest contributors: Purchase electricity is a big one, and this can be reduced if the university were to implement renewable resources on campus. Followed by community students, at 27,00o metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalences. And that was followed by directly financed travel.

Recommendations: Community: explore a carpool permit option, **Electricity purchase:** explore renewable or co-generated electricity, solar energy purchase from Space X (on-going), **Fleet Fuel Consumption:** Converting more of the fleet to hybrid or electric vehicles, **Nitrogen Fertilizer**: Utilizing compost, **Refrigerant:** Reducing stress on air condition units when possible, **Business Travel**: Encouraging carpool, bus and train use, LED Lights, more recycled paper purchase, solid waste composting.

Senator Peter James Ehimika, how come we spend so much on electricity? Is it just normal operations or do you feel like there are certain ways that we as a university, can cut back?

Response was yes, most of if is operations and how we operate all these facilities. In particular trough the air conditioning and certain facilities require certain air temperature because of the research that's being conducted in these facilities. Our newer facilities have very high quality and efficient systems, but some of our older facilities do not and as some of our funding is made available and retrofits are made available those changes are happening as well as lighting the type of lighting that we have in our new facilities are LED lights, where some of the lighting and the older facilities may not yet be retrofitted to LED lighting. So those are some of the things, but it's also the way we conduct ourselves on a daily basis unplugging all the things that are charged. The way we behave is just one way the university can reduce its carbon footprint.

In the past there have been energy conservation campaigns that have been launched graphically by the facilities department, with hopes that everyone can participate and unplug before they leave for the holidays. In particular, changes in the temperatures in our buildings and being able to understand that, we need to start saving. I know that this is sometimes difficult for some individuals but learning to how learning how to dress yourself appropriately for the temperature in your buildings. If you know that it's going to be a cooler day, you know, wearing things that will keep you warmer, as well as when it's a very warm day wearing things that will keep you cool within your facility.

So these are things that can and should be should be done by everyone. These are things that can and should be done by everyone. We are seeking your support in launching campaigns that would allow to educate and having conversations about bringing more public transportation closer to our homes and to our institution so that we can use public transportation, rather than using individual vehicles and carpooling I know that the transportation department has been looking at a carpooling.

Employee Resources Page – Nicole Englitsch & Jennifer McGehee-Valdez

- Was presented last year, but there have been some changes to the website & are relaunching.
- Two ways to access site: https://www.utrgv.edu/employee-resources/or go to UTRGV, About tab, then Employee Resources.
- There are nine tiles, depending on what you're looking for: Calendars & Announcements, Organization Information, Faculty & Staff Resources (which also includes Manager Resources), Policies & Procedures, Technology, Amenities & Services, Health & Wellness, & Safety.
- Email Address: employeeresources@UTRGV.edu - email with recommendations as to resources that are missing, if something is outdated or if there or errors. Please make sure if we are linking to your department website or any material that you're in charge of, let us know if there's a new version of it so we can link to the new version. Best case, you just replace your old version with the new one on the same link, so it automatically updates on our side. If you make any changes, go through the website.
- Since Launch in May, almost 9,000-page views; almost 4,300 on the landing page; over 3,000 of those were unique users, which means a lot of employees are clicking on it.
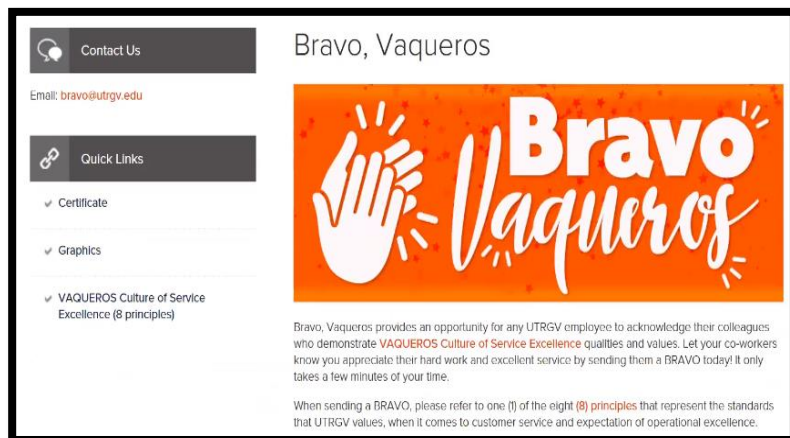
Bravo Vaqueros – Sneak Peak

- Collaborative idea from Dr. Arney that will be housed under the Employee Resource Center.
- Hope to launch right before Thanksgiving.
- Housing it under the Employee Resource Center where we have some other projects that are collaborative.
- Email address: Bravo@utrgv.edu – let us know if you have any recommendations as to what else could be included or how we could make this better.
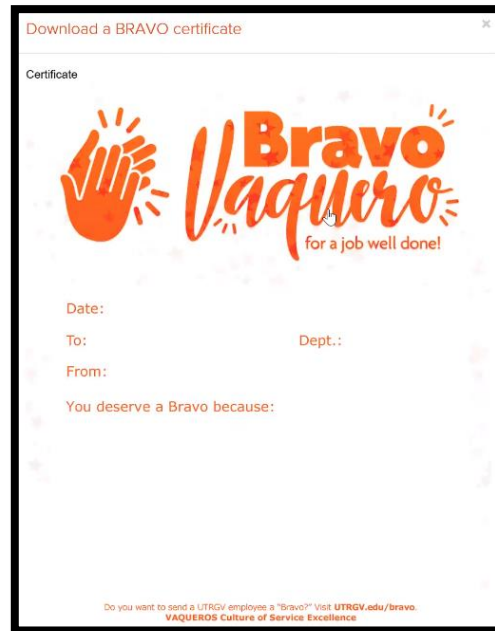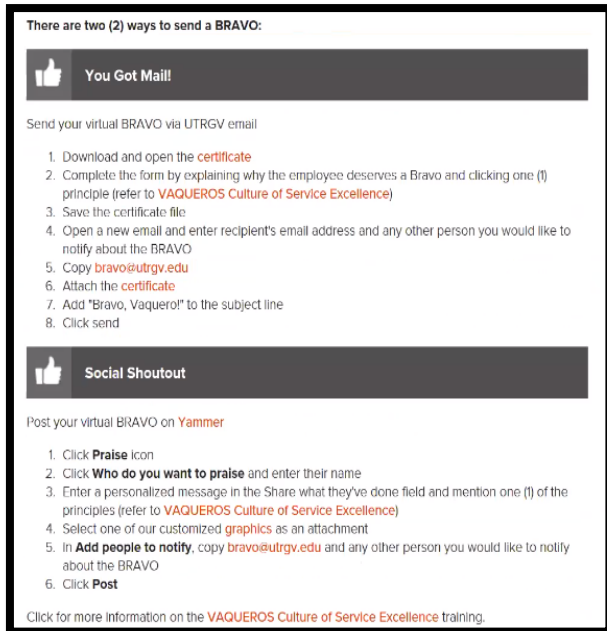
Question from Staff Senator, Maria Juarez-Serna: These are not filtered? You can automatically just send them, & people could just view?

Answer from Staff Senator, Nicole Englitsch: The Yammer ones are just posted. There is no one reviewing them. With email, it is different-you can just download the certificate, it is PDF fillable, & send it. We are adding Bravo@utrgv.edu for tracking purposes, to find out how many were sent. It is just peer to peer. That doesn't mean some of them won't be displayed eventually if we see a great story. You can keep it confidential. You have the option not to add Bravo@utrgv.edu, but we suggest adding for the tracking aspect.

Question Staff Senator, David Torres: Is this like Unsung Heroes?
Answer Jennifer McGehee-Valdez: That is through our news & internal communications department & started with student writers that wanted to share stories of those employees who aren't in the forefront; so separate initiative but same spirit of highlighting & saying, Hey, you're awesome & doing a great job.

Question Staff Senator, Rebekah Sepulveda: Have we thought about recognizing anyone who receives a Bravo for all eight values.
Answer Staff Senator, Nicole Englitsch: Yes, still brainstorming how recognition would work in this case.

Comment Staff Senator, Yvette C. Padilla: Happy that this has taken off. But I did want to share that this initiative, when we mentioned it here within staff senate, started because we were talking about the culture of the university & the unity between staff & faculty & how we really wanted to increase that. And so now that it's been rolled out or as soon as it's rolled out, we really want to encourage everybody to start using it start complimenting your peers & let them know that they are appreciated, because that's going to start with us. So, if we start that culture, then the rest of the university will continue.

- **c. UT System EAC Update** - Mr. Peter-James Ehimika & Ms. Carla Lopez
  - We meet quarterly we met in September and meet again in January.
  - 2 priorities: Educational Opportunities and Health Opportunities
  - Peter-James Ehimika is on Campus safety committee (chair) – looking at 4 main areas: risk and emergency management, training, interpersonal, communications – looking at best practices as it pertains to all of these
  - Carla Lopez is on recognition and programs: focusing on benefits and wellness

- **d. Graduation Pins – Ms. Sepulveda**

  Last year this was presented as a medallion and realized staff can't always wear medallions at work. So, I am re-proposing this as a graduation pin for your lanyard. It could be a nice way to recognize employees as graduating while employed at UTRGV. We can run reports, some might not get picked up so with a form, an employee can submit a request for the pin and if they meet
  We had 53 over the last year in December we will have 33 participating in commencement.

  The lapel pin will be distributed to staff who met the following requirements:
  a) Must be a full time, active classified employee
  b) Must have completed (6) months of continuous full-time service at UTRGV
  c) Must be in Good Standing with Human Resources
  d) Must be in Graduation Eligible as coded by the Office of Registrar
  e) Complete form by deadline established

  2" Pin, all silver, Roberto Castro and his Marketing Team did a great job designing it.

  Question from Staff Sentor, Jocelyn Foster, employees graduating while we are staff, will ask will they qualify for a pin? That is still to be determined by the number of pins we order.
  Questions: Out of the 33 graduating, how do you envision the distribution? It is our goal that they would attend a staff senate meeting to get their pins or the Alumni Center. Staff Sentor,
  Staff Senator, Carla Lopez asked about distribution, do we anticipate them coming in to pick up. The goal would be to come to the Staff Senate Meeting and recognize them for those who attend the meeting.
  Staff Senator, Yvette Padilla asked if they could have a party for them at the Alumni Center and if that is a possibility?

  All this is yet to be determined.

- V.**Pending Business** – No pending business to report

- VI.**Public Comments & Questions** –
  - a. **Comments and Questions:** Guests and Senators - Mr. David Torres
    - Campus Police is hosting a Self Defense classes if you are interested please sign up.
    - Campus Night for Men's Basketball night Free Admission, Feb. 13th Thursday at 7:00 PM
    - Jr Vaqueros Club Membership to attend all games. 20% discount on season tickets, ribbon cutting for Quads, December 3rd, Vaqueros Village.
    - November 25th - Diabetes Awareness
    - Staff Senator, Carla Lopez announced next week is great American Smoke out, invite a smoker to give it up for at least one day to kick start their healthy choices.

  Motion to close public section of this meeting of Staff Senate meeting was made Peter-James Ehimika and seconded by Matthew Pollock; meeting moved to close session.

- VII.**Committee and Task Force Reports**
  - a. Civic Responsibilities - Ms. Veronica De La Garza & Mr. Matthew Pollock
  - b. Administrative Processes - Ms. Monica Tovar & Ms. Isabel Saldana
  - c. Staff Success - Ms. Karen Dorado & Ms. Teresa Villarreal
  - d. Communications - Ms. Noelyn Llasos & Ms. Yvette Padilla
  - e. Workplace Civility - Ms. Monica Tovar
  - f. Telecommuting - Mr. David Torres