

# The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley<sup>TM</sup>

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## Staff Senate

### Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 17, 2024, 9:00 am – 11:00 am

### Teams

#### I. Call to Order – 9:02

Mirayda called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM, and Ricardo conducted the roll call, confirming the presence of senators and establishing a quorum.

#### II. Roll Call / Establishment of Quorum – 9:03

*Ricardo Lopez, Secretary*

All present

#### III. Welcome & Introduction – 9:05

*Rolando initiated the approval of the September 2024 meeting minutes, which was moved by Elizabeth Reyes and seconded by Elizabeth Salinas. The minutes were approved without opposition.*

#### IV. Guest Speakers

##### a. *Dr. Gerardo Munoz-Monaco*, Associate Professor of Medicine

SOM Primary and Community Care ISU

Rolando introduced Dr. Gerardo Munoz Monaco, an associate professor at the School of Medicine, who discussed the primary care services available to university employees and students.

i. **Introduction:** Rolando introduced Dr. Gerardo Munoz Monaco, highlighting his role as an associate professor at the School of Medicine and his involvement in primary care and community care.

ii. **Roles and Titles:** Dr. Munoz Monaco mentioned his positions, including division chief for the primary care division, program director, and President of the Texas Academy of Family Practice of the Rio Grande Valley.

- iii. **Primary Care Services Overview:** Dr. Gerardo Munoz Monaco provided an overview of the primary care services offered by the university, including clinics on various campuses and the importance of preventive care.
- iv. **Service Availability:** Dr. Munoz Monaco detailed the availability of primary care services across multiple campuses, including clinics in Edinburgh, Brownsville, and Harlingen.
- v. **Preventive Care:** He emphasized the importance of preventive care, stating that the primary goal is to prevent sickness rather than just treat it.
- vi. **Clinic Locations:** Specific clinic locations were mentioned, including facilities next to the gymnasium in Edinburgh and near the VA in Harlingen.
- vii. **Staffing:** Dr. Munoz Monaco highlighted the staffing at these clinics, including nurse practitioners and MDs, and the capacity to see a significant number of patients daily.
- viii. **Breast Cancer Awareness and Oncology Services:** Dr. Gerardo Munoz Monaco highlighted the importance of breast cancer awareness and mentioned the upcoming oncology and surgical center set to open in the first quarter of 2024.
- ix. **Breast Cancer Awareness:** Dr. Munoz Monaco emphasized the importance of breast cancer awareness, particularly during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.
- x. **Oncology Center:** He mentioned the upcoming oncology and surgical center, which is set to open in the first quarter of 2024, aiming to enhance cancer care services.
- xi. **Employee and Student Health Services:** Dr. Gerardo Munoz Monaco emphasized the availability of health services for university employees, students, and their dependents, including clinics on multiple campuses and telemedicine options.
- xii. **Service Coverage:** Dr. Munoz Monaco confirmed that health services are available to all university employees, students, their dependents, and retired employees.
- xiii. **Telemedicine:** He discussed the availability of telemedicine services for those who may have mobility or transportation issues, ensuring broader access to healthcare.
- xiv. **Home Visits:** Home visits are available through the Mercedes facility for elderly patients or those with significant mobility issues.

- xv. **COVID and Flu Vaccines:** Dr. Gerardo Munoz Monaco confirmed that the UT health clinic provides both COVID and flu vaccines and recommended that everyone get vaccinated.
- xvi. **Vaccine Availability:** Dr. Munoz Monaco confirmed that both COVID and flu vaccines are available at the UT health clinic.
- xvii. **Vaccine Recommendation:** He strongly recommended that everyone get vaccinated against both COVID and the flu to ensure better health outcomes.
- xviii. **Walk-ins:** Patients can receive vaccines as walk-ins at the employee health clinic, while other facilities may require an appointment.
- xix. **Vaccine Safety:** Dr. Munoz Monaco explained that the vaccines are safe and do not cause illness, but may cause a stress reaction in some individuals.

b. *Jodie Dominguez, Program Manager*

Student Food Bank

- i. **Student Food Pantry Overview:** Mary Dominguez, the program manager for the student food pantry, provided an overview of the pantry's services, including the process for students to receive food and the availability of lockers for after-hours pick-up.
- ii. **Service Overview:** Mary Dominguez explained that the food pantry is open to all UTRGV students, with no specific criteria other than being a student.
- iii. **Enrollment Process:** Students need to fill out a one-time enrollment form and can then order food online for pick-up on distribution days.
- iv. **Distribution Days:** Food distribution occurs twice a week on Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at both the Edinburgh and Brownsville campuses.
- v. **Lockers:** Lockers are available for after-hours pick-up, with the service set to launch in Brownsville later in the semester.
- vi. **Ways to Support the Food Pantry:** Mary Dominguez discussed various ways staff can support the food pantry, including hosting food drives, providing mentorship, and making monetary or food donations.

- vii. **Hosting Food Drives:** Staff can support the pantry by organizing food drives within their departments or collaborating with the pantry for larger events.
- viii. **Monetary Donations:** Monetary donations can be made through the UTRGV website, with options for one-time donations or monthly payroll deductions.
- ix. **Food Donations:** Non-perishable food items can be donated at designated yellow bins located outside the pantry locations.
- x. **Mentorship:** Staff can provide mentorship and support networks for students facing food insecurity, helping to reduce stigma and promote pantry services.
- xi. **Impact of the Food Pantry:** Mary Dominguez shared feedback from students on how the food pantry has positively impacted their academic performance and reduced their financial stress.
- xii. **Student Feedback:** Mary Dominguez shared that students reported reduced financial stress and improved academic performance due to the food pantry's support.
- xiii. **Family Impact:** Some students mentioned that the pantry's services also helped their families by alleviating grocery expenses.
- xiv. **Mental Health:** Students expressed that the pantry reduced their mental and financial stress, allowing them to focus better on their studies.

c. *Kristine Chavez*, Assistant VP

Human Resources

- i. **Merit 2025 Program:** Kristina Chavez, the assistant VP of Human Resources, provided details about the Merit 2025 program, including eligibility criteria, the timeline for merit adjustments, and the distribution of merit letters.
- ii. **Eligibility Criteria:** Kristina Chavez outlined the eligibility criteria for the Merit 2025 program, including uninterrupted employment since November 1st, compliance with training, and a passing evaluation.
- iii. **Timeline:** The merit adjustments will be effective November 1st, with the increases reflected in the December paychecks.
- iv. **Distribution of Letters:** Merit letters will be distributed in early November, with some divisions choosing to send them via email or in person.

d. *Nina Barrientos*, Employment Engagement Wellness Coordinator

Human Resources

- i. **State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC):** Nina Parentos discussed the SECC, its importance, and how employees can contribute to various charities through payroll deductions or one-time donations.

**V. Committee Reports**

a. *Jeremy San Miguel*, Communications Committee Chair

i. **Website and Communication Updates**

1. Updated website with information on division senators.
2. Encouraged staff to connect with their senators to build stronger UT RGV bonds.

ii. **Halloween Costume Contest**

1. Contest launch: October 31st.
2. Categories available for individuals and groups.
3. Winners will be determined by the number of likes on Facebook and Instagram.
4. Encouraged participation to embrace the spooky spirit of the season.

iii. **3. Staff Appreciation and Mental Health Support**

1. Staff are the backbone of UT RGV and vital to its success.
2. Programs designed to celebrate and support staff:

iv. **Cafecito with the Senator:** Opportunities for connection and recognition of achievements.

v. **Staff Senate Cares Video Series** (Launching Soon):

1. Positive mental health messages from familiar and new faces.
2. Tips for handling challenges.
3. Resources like the Employee Assistance Program and others provided by the university.



4. Emphasized the university's commitment to staff well-being.
- b. Yesenia Carter, Constitutions & Elections Committee Chair
- i. **Encouraged attendees to visit the Staff Senate website to:**
    1. Learn more about the committee and its role.
    2. Access the Handbook of Operating and Procedures.
    3. Review the Staff Senate Constitution for details on its purpose and structure.
    4. Provided a reminder that the website contains contact information for any questions or concerns.
  - ii. **No current updates or requests for changes to the Constitution.**
- c. Omar Nedzelsky Jr., Business Processes & Staff Support Chair
- i. **Committee Leadership Update**
    1. Welcomed Elizabeth Salinas as the new Co-Chair.
    2. Elizabeth is a staff senator from the Division of Research.
    3. Acknowledged the committee for voting and electing Elizabeth.
    4. Elizabeth briefly introduced herself and expressed enthusiasm for the role.
  - ii. **Secure 2.0 Act of 2022:**
    1. Suggestion from the Center for Online Learning and Technology to share information with HR Benefits about enabling retirement contributions to assist employees with student loan payments.
    2. Committee to collaborate with HR Benefits on disseminating this information.
  - iii. **Safety and Cleanliness on Campus Walkways:**
    1. Concerns regarding UTRGV vehicle and golf cart traffic and the cleanliness of the Bronc Trail.
    2. Committee to share these concerns with Campus Police and Facilities.
  - iv. **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Changes:**
    1. Feedback on potential impacts of overtime protection changes on staff positions.

2. Committee to share the comment with HR Compensation for review and response.

**v. Parking Concerns on Edinburg Campus:**

1. Issues raised about insufficient parking for staff and students this semester.
2. Committee to address this with Parking and Transportation to explore potential improvements or developments.

**vi. Next Steps:**

1. Additional four submissions will be reviewed in the upcoming committee meeting and shared during the November Staff Senate meeting.

**d. Krystal Marroquin, Staff Success Committee**

**i. Employee Appreciation Plans:**

1. The committee is working on plans to contribute to employee appreciation in the upcoming semester.
2. Details will be shared closer to the event, so stay tuned for more information.

**ii. Senator Spotlight Initiative:**

1. Launching Senator Spotlight in collaboration with the Communications Committee.
2. Purpose: Introduce staff senators in small batches based on divisions, making it easier to meet them informally.
3. Focus on sharing fun facts to create a personal connection and make it more comfortable for staff to engage.
4. The goal is to encourage staff to feel more at ease in meeting with senators, whether for a coffee chat or other informal conversations.

**iii. Upcoming Events and Staff Engagement:**

1. The committee is exploring ways to engage with staff through attending events, such as games, or by finding other opportunities to meet staff where they are, rather than waiting for them to come to the committee.

**VI. Public Comments & Questions**

*Dr. Mirayada Torres-Avila, Parliamentarian*

a. Nina Barrientos:

- i. Reminded everyone about the UT System Team Challenge that began on October 1st.
- ii. This six-week program encourages teams of 3-5 staff members to collectively reach 1,000,000 steps.
- iii. The top three UTRGV teams with the most steps will receive incentives.
- iv. Participants can backtrack their activity up to two weeks, so it's not too late to join or create a team.
- v. For questions or assistance, employees can contact Employee Wellness or Nina directly.

b. Carlos Ayala:

- i. Announced that he's a captain of a Team Challenge group and invited others to join.
- ii. Promoted the Health and Human Performance Department Wellness Program.
- iii. Free gym access is available for UTRGV staff at both Edinburg and Brownsville campuses, with a full weight room and assistance from exercise science students.
- iv. Edinburg campus hours: 12:00-2:00 PM and 5:00-7:00 PM.
- v. Brownsville campus hours: Monday-Thursday, 5:00-7:00 PM.
- vi. For questions or more information, staff can reach out to Carlos or Paula Delgado at the Edinburg campus.

c. Nina Barrientos:

- i. Encouraged staff to connect with their Wellness Champion by visiting the Wellness Champions website.
- ii. Employees can join the Wellness listserv (email employee wellness at utrgv.edu) to receive information on wellness activities and updates.

d. Fay Kennan:



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## Staff Senate

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- i. Invited everyone to attend the PowerPoint event for Breast Cancer Awareness today from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM in Edinburg.
  - ii. The event is open to students, faculty, and staff, with the first 100 attendees receiving a free shirt.
- e. Carlos Ayala:
  - i. Encouraged everyone to vote in the upcoming elections, regardless of political affiliation.
  - ii. Early voting begins Monday, 21st, with locations available on the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses.

### **VII. Adjourn – 10:26**

Matthew Lerma moved to adjourn the Staff Senate general meeting for the month of October, and Matthew Moncus seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:26 by Dr. Mirayda Torres-Avila.

Prepared by Ricardo Lopez