

Classified Staff Assembly – April 18,2024

Brent Dotson – I would like to welcome everyone and thank you all for coming.

Most of you are aware of what the Staff Assembly is and what we do here. I'm going to give you an overview of what Staff Council has accomplished over the last year and then I'm going to ask that you point us in the direction that you would like us to work towards in the next year.

This is also the year that we vote for the new Board of Governors Rep. So, I will be looking for volunteers and nominations for that election.

Year in Review: I'm going to start off with the new Evaluation Tool. There was a lot of time and effort spent in developing that process and the new forms to be used. We are all immersed in that process, now right? So, with any new process and forms there's a lot of adjustments and snags along the way and those things have to be ironed out and fixed. So I ask for a little bit of patience through that time. If issues arise for you, please reach out and let me know so that we can look into what we need to do to fix it moving forward.

Any questions or comments from any of you that have actually started the process? Everyone is using the Word document, right?

Jackie Bennett – Is anyone having issues using the Word document?

Kim Hitt – The drop downs did not drop down.

Jackie – I will schedule a meeting with you tomorrow.

Brent – Anyone else?

I have a lot of confidence in this new form, but like I said it's going to take time. And at the end of the evaluation time this time we will be sending out a questioner asking for feed-back from everyone. So that we can adjust the process for next year if needed. Remember your voice counts! We do have control over this tool and we do have input on the process. So please, don't be bashful.

Kim Hitt - Are there going to be opportunities for tweaks to be made to this form?

Brent – If need be, Yes. This is the basis moving forward, this is the raw deal this time. We are going to get through this process, we will see what works and what didn't. We are going to get your feed-back, so that if we need to make any changes we can do that.

Any other questions about the Evaluation tool or process?

I'm pleased to announce to everybody that the updated guidelines that we put on the Staff Council scholarships and the Children of Classified Staff Scholarships, were very beneficial to all the recipients that applied. We had several applications for the Children of Classified Scholarship and every single one of them were able to be paid out. So we were able to compensate ever application through the Fall and Spring, nobody was turned away.

The next big thing is our Purse Bingo. Purse Bingo is the day after tomorrow, Saturday.

We have had an excellent committee working on that. I'm pretty excited about it, there are some additional games and things that have been added into the Purse Bingo this year. We have added more purses, more games and the concessions have also added more items. I don't have any figures for anybody yet except that, last year at this time we had pre-sold 54 tickets and this year we have pre-sold better than 140. Just a reminder that the proceeds for this Purse Bingo are going to benefit the Drema Starkey Scholarship Fund and the Student Emergency Fund. Tickets are still available in the Business Office for \$20. They are also \$20 at the door. If you buy them in advance it qualifies you for the Early Bird Drawing. If you get them at the door, no Early Bird for you. (Laughter)

I would really like to thank everyone for all the donations and the time everybody has put in to make Purse Bingo a success. Purse Bingo was one of those fundraisers that was started a while ago and it's one of those things as Chair I wanted to keep alive moving forward. I think it benefits good causes and helps financially challenged students continue their education.

Moving on, we are still working on getting our meeting minutes updated on the website. We have some on there, we are still working on getting the others approved and getting them on the website as well so everybody has access to those. Sector reps should be sharing those meeting minutes with those they represent, but for some reason you're not getting those, they are available on the website.

Just want to throw out a reminder that Staff Council meets the 3rd Thursday of every month at 2:00. It used to be the 3rd Wednesday but we had some scheduling conflicts with some of the members this year so we changed it to Thursday. I try to get that email out, through the Wrike system, to all classified staff so that everyone knows when that meeting will be, sometimes I get it out to them late, sometimes I don't get it out at all. That's one of my downfalls and I apologize for that. I just want to stress to everybody that it is the 3rd Thursday of every month. The room may or may not change that would be the only difference, but if you want to attend any meeting feel free to reach out to me and I will give you the information so that you can attend any meeting that you want. You all have every right to be in those meetings.

That is pretty much my review over the past year. The Evaluation process took up a lot of time. So we didn't get a lot of time to focus on much else, we did address a few financial issues, employee pay and some things like that. They are all in the meeting minutes so you can read up on those. The Board of Governors approved pay increases for the upcoming year. Also, they made sure to set our base pay for new employees coming in to make it more appealing so that we can bring in good talent and hopefully keep them.

So, at this time I would like to open the floor to the Assembly for any concerns, questions, comments, or anything you would like to share with the Assembly or Staff Council. I'm also looking for ideas. What direction would you like to see Staff Council head in the upcoming year.

Tell me what you want me to do. (Laughter)

Brent – One of the main things I wanted to do when I was elected Chair was review the Children of Classified Staff scholarship and the Classified Staff Employee Scholarship. They had not been reviewed in a really long time, there was a significant amount of money in both of those funds and they weren't being used. I wanted to make them more usable based on the current structure of the institution.

The institution started the Tuition Waiver after the Scholarships, and once the tuition waiver came into play the scholarships took a back burner, so nobody was utilizing those funds. So I wanted to start using those funds to help additional students who are effected by or not eligible for the tuition waiver.

Kim Hitt – I would like to see us do more broadcasting the fact that those opportunities are available. So that staff who, when they started their kids weren't that age but they are now and don't know about them. There were resources I could've used with my daughter that I did not know were there. So if there was some way that we could educate the staff that these opportunities for assistance are available.

Brent – I will tell you this, at one point we were working on a system to do just that. I don't know if any of this information is shared in the new hire packet.

You were just hired. Was there anything in the new hire packet that said anything about Staff Council or the Employee Scholarships?

Paul – No. The only thing in there was about the Employee Waiver.

Brent – That was one of the things we talked about working on was trying to put together something that could be added to the new hire packet to expose Staff Council, the scholarships funds and all of these things. I have received phone calls from other classified staff inquiring about that because they heard it through the grape vine. So, I agree with you. That is one thing that we are going to work on this next year is to try and get that set up to add to the new hire packets. I think that's probably the best way to make that known to new people coming in.

Does anybody else have another idea about that?

Kim Hitt – If there is a question about the waiver or scholarships is it HR that is approached is it you? Who do they need to reach out to?

Brent – It's on the website. That is one thing we did accomplish this year, if you go to the website, click on faculty and staff, go to the bottom and one of the buttons is actually a staff council button. Once you click that button, it takes you to the Staff Council page, and on that page is where you can get the forms for Employee of the Month, you can see the scholarships there, that's where the meeting minutes are.

They can actually start wherever they want, they can go to HR but HR will send them to me.

Jennifer Williams – That's what I was going to say. Most people are not going to look on the website, especially if there new they are going to go straight to HR, whether it pertains to HR or not.

Brandon Amos – The Tuition Waiver actually goes through Financial Aid, I believe, and then any costs above that would be where the staff council would potentially be able to take care of.

Brent – And students who are ineligible for the Waiver they can apply for the scholarships as well, because that's what we built into that criteria that there's a one-time exemption to use these funds to help get them back on track to meet SAP in order to be eligible for the waiver.

Hannah Kitchen – Did you say that the minutes would be added to the website? Because the last ones I can find are from August 31st. I lied November 16th.

Brent – We are still working on getting the other ones approved. We can't do that today because it's the assembly, next month is when I think we are going to catch them all up and get that updated on the website.

Cyndi Dotson – December and January we didn't have meetings because of the Christmas luncheon and the holidays and all that, but February and March I have ready.

Jeannie Jones – This is something that I just noticed recently because I'm not out in the hallways that much, I don't know who's responsible for it, but I noticed the plaques with the employee's years of service looks like it hasn't been updated in several years.

Brent – I don't know anything about those. Is that something that Staff Council did?

Jeanie – I don't know. I just know that they used to be put up in the Spring after they had the big shindig in the multi-purpose room where they awarded plaques to people for years of service. I know some of the ones that are up in the hall are people that are retired and no longer work here.

Brent – That's a good question. I will look into it. Does anyone else know who's responsible for that?

Jennifer Williams – I don't know for sure but it seems like something the President's Office would do.

Brent – I will find out who is responsible and see if we can't get it updated.

How does everybody feel about the Staff Council cork board that's down this hallway that hasn't had anything in it for a long time? Does anyone have an opinion on that?

Staff Council has a board, you know the one's in the hallway that are under lock and key, it was right inside the front entrance by the Foundation and used to have the Employee of the Month pictures were put and that kind of thing. That's kind of went down by the wayside and I've never done anything with it but I know that ours is in this main hallway and doesn't have anything in it and hasn't for a long time.

(Several people said they didn't know we had one)

Jackie – They only reason I knew we had one is because it had Debbie's picture in it and she had retired so I figured we should pull that picture out of there. That was the last thing in there.

Brent – I never appointed anybody to do it because it hadn't been used in so long I didn't even think about it. So, I would like to ask everyone opinion, would you like for Staff Council to start using it? I'm trying to get Employee of the Month put on the monitors.

Jennifer Williams – I think it would be a good idea to use it for something so it's not just a big empty corkboard.

Austin Fields – We could use it to put informational stuff on there like the Tuition Waivers and Scholarships.

(Several people loved that idea)

Kim Hitt – We could advertise when we have the luncheons and things like that.

Brent – The secretary is hearing all these good ideas. (Laughter)

Jeanie Jones – What about putting something on the website just for faculty and staff, I heard somebody saying they were going to have several grandkids, where if people wanted to announce they were getting married or having kids or some of our retirees have past away. I think there are people who might want to know that. Where staff can share personal stuff like that.

Brent – So, isn't there a Facebook page?

(Several people said yes)

Brandon – Even the Employee of the Month is on there.

Brent – I knew it existed, I've never requested anything be put there. I don't know that when I request the Wrike to put it on the website, maybe it's an automatic thing.

That might be something that I can check on to see how to get access to post things.

Brandon – The Bulletin Board on the website hasn't been updated in forever either. No promotions, no new hires, nothing.

Jackie – Talk to James. James Dobbs in marketing.

Brent – I'll double-check on the Facebook page/group.

Jeannie – And then maybe we can get word out to employees to let them know if you have good news, or got a degree, or want to announce something where to send it to so it can be posted to share with everyone.

Brent – I think we need to get the word out to people to let them know that group exist.

Elizabeth Knick – Maybe once you get it updated, someone can just go in there and send out an invite to staff who are on Facebook to join.

Kurt – I know you talked about letting new employees know about Staff Council and the website and all those things, which is great, but what about long-time employees that may not be aware of these things. Could we maybe once a year send out an email blast reminding them of Staff Council and maybe sending a link to the Facebook page and things like that?

Brent – That's a good idea. I am writing that down right now.

Kurt – That way there are multiple places that let them know that information so they have no excuse to say "I didn't know that"

Jeannie Jones – Just like, how many people got the invite about the meeting today? Used to be years ago when there was a staff Assembly the room was packed. How many people are here today?

Brent – That's one thing I've been working on. Our Staff Council meetings every month have grown. I don't remember if I talked about it in the last Assembly, about including Non-Classified, non-Supervisory staff to Staff Council meetings?

Jackie – Hi! We got invited to the party! Lol

Brent – I send out special invites to them every month so that they can participate in Staff Council as well. When Dr. Jackson was picked as our President, I and the Board of Governors Rep, Cody, meet with her every month. And one of the topics we discussed is how there is a large group of staff members that don't have a safe place to meet and voice their concerns, their gripes, their complaints or simply share their ideas. I told Dr. Jackson that I would love to bring them into Staff Council because they are non-supervisory.

Kim Hitt – We also need to check that everyone that is supposed to get the emails are getting them. I asked one of the ladies in the tutoring center today and she did not get it. Is there someone we can contact about that and say hey I'm not receiving these?

Jackie and Austin – Hi! We can track down the issue and make sure things are updated.

Brent – If anyone thinks of anything else, feel free to call me or email me if there is anything you want us to look into or you have any ideas or comments.

Now we need to move on to our election. This is an even numbered year so we need to vote on the Board of Governors Rep. I have 1 nomination already, it was a nomination that I put out there, I already spoke to him and he accepted. And that's Cody. Cody has been the Board of Governors Rep for a number of years now, him and I work closely together, monthly meetings with the President. I think Cody does a great job, he comes back with a really detailed review after every meeting. He is my nomination, so I need, from you, nominations, volunteers to be part of the Election with Cody.

If nobody else volunteers or gets nominated, I will still have to go through the motions and send out a ballot but I'd like to have somebody go against him. Normally I would close the ballot during this meeting because I have 10 nominations for Board of Governors Rep, since I only have 1 I'm not going to close the ballot, unless somebody gives me another one.

Hannah Kitchen – What do they do?

Brent – The BoG Rep attends all Board of Governors meetings and represents staff in those meetings. They address certain topics and they ask the what are the Staffs thoughts, where do they stand on this topic? So, it's the BoG Reps responsibility to have conversations with staff and get their feelings when an important topic is coming up. So that they can express to the Board how the staff really feels about certain things. And they also attend all Staff Council meetings and give a report of what was discussed in those Board meetings. The BoG Rep is a sitting and voting Staff Council member, that's why they are elected in.

(Everyone is pushing to just give it to Cody)

Brent – What if something were to happen to Cody or in his life which causes him to step down? Instead of having an emergency election, the runner up could just move into that role and we wouldn't have to do another election. If there were more than 2 on the original ballot then we would have another election between the other members.

Jackie – So you just need 1 volunteer and we can move past this?

I will volunteer and I will campaign for Cody until I'm blue in the face!

Brent – You are not allowed. It has to be a Classified Staff member.

Jackie – I tried to take one for the team. Sorry.

Brent – Ok, this is what I'm going to do. I'm not going to close the election today, I'm going to leave it open. I will send out an email through the Wrike system asking for nominations and/or volunteers. And I will give that until next Wednesday at 4pm and then I will send the ballot out on Friday and give that until May 1st for people to vote.

Encourage everybody you see to either nominate or volunteer. If we only get Cody that's fine but I would like to have at least one other on the ballot also.

Cyndi – Just so you have a loser? Lol

Jackie – I could've been that loser!

(Laughter from everyone)

Brent – I want to thank everyone for coming out, it's been a great time. I would like to close this meeting if there is nothing else.

Cyndi – I motion

Jennifer – 2nd.