



Staff Council General Meeting minutes for July 19, 2023
Zoom Meeting 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Minutes Recorded by Maria Estrada, Staff Council Secretary

Board: Tremaine Kwasikpui, Staff Council President; JR Sears, Staff Council President-Elect; Maria Estrada, Staff Council Secretary; Gerrelyn Davidson, Staff Council Treasurer; Rachael Hudspeth, Staff Council Communications Officer

Guests: Erica Morales, Interim Assistant Vice President for Employment Services and Operations; Dr. Blanchard, President, University of Houston Downtown

Call to Order: The Staff Council general meeting was called to order by Staff Council President, Tremaine Kwasikpui around 10:05 am.

Reports: Mr. Kwasikpui greets and welcomes attendees to the Staff Council General Meeting for July 19, 2023.

Welcome New Gators

Mr. Sears introduces the new UHD gators/employees.

- Lesly Ortiz, Program Assistant, Urban Education
- Anthony Levey, Director, Criminal Justice Training Center
- Maria Bhattacharjee, Program Director, Urban Education
- Rebecca Castillo, Department Business Administrator III, Enrollment
- Lily Ewherido, Administrative Assistant I, Disability Services
- Kavon Samie, Multimedia Engineer I, Technology Learning

Edge Grant Recipient

Mr. Sears introduces the Edge Grant recipients for the month of July.

- July Recipient: Monica Villareal

ESO Presentation

Erica Morales, Interim Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services and Operations

- Mrs. Morales reviews the items she will be discussing, which are staff merit guidelines, staff awards, and the 2023 staff climate survey.
- Mrs. Morales begins by discussing the Staff Merit Guidelines:
 - Eligibility:
 - Staff must be eligible and not a contract/temporary employee.
 - The evaluation must meet expectation or higher.
 - Cannot have any delinquent debt.
 - Must have completed their mandatory training.
 - Have not been suspended or on a PIP from January 1-June 30.

- Merit Allocation:
 - There is a 2% merit pool.
 - All increases will be effective September 1.
 - The distribution is based on staff evaluation scores within your cohort.
- Communication:
 - Salaries will be loaded into the budget system on or by July 21.
 - An informational email from your department head will be sent on July 24.
 - HR will send a formal email on August 25.
 - Salaries will be loaded on People Soft on August 28.

Question: Is the 2% across the board for all staff?

Answer: We have a 2% rule, but it is distributed differently depending on your evaluation score. All employees that exceed expectations or above will receive a 3% increase.

Question: Does it apply to hourly and salary employees?

Answer: It applies to all employees.

- Next, Mrs. Morales discusses the Staff Awards:
 - The event will occur on September 28, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in A300.
 - The following awards will include a monetary award.
 - Student Success- \$1000
 - Leadership- \$1000
 - Rookie of the Year- \$500
 - Goes the Extra Mile- \$500
 - Teamwork- will receive a lunch for the team and a day off.
 - President's Staff Excellence Award- \$3500
- Finally, Mrs. Morales discusses the 2023 Staff Climate Survey:
 - The survey was administered anonymously in late spring by the Office of Assessment at the request of the Strategic Planning Committee that oversees the engagement of faculty and staff.
 - Of the 630 faculty and staff that were invited to participate, 280 responded (44%).
 - Although staff are overwhelmingly committed to the mission of the university, 23% plan on leaving within the next 12 months, and 43% would not recommend UHD as an employer of choice.
 - The four factors that correlate with employees planning to leave and not recommending UHD as an employer are communication and decision making, recognition and advancement, understaffing and lack of resources/support, and compensation.
 - Communication and decision-making:
 - Comments include staff in the decision-making process of new initiatives and changes, transparency, surveying employees on department/executive leadership, providing staff ombuds, and having regular department/division meetings.
 - Currently happening- HR leadership meets with Staff Council to problem-solve and discuss issues, climate survey results are communicated in Staff Council meetings, Staff Ombuds Policy has been approved, and department/division meetings should be occurring.

- A task force will be assigned to establish a focus group to understand staff needs better and develop a timeline.
 - Acknowledgment and recognition:
 - Comments include that leadership should acknowledge and respond to staff needs and concerns, leadership should engage more with employees, staff should have roles in commencement, and recognize or spotlight staff contributions in the UHD news.
 - Currently happening- AWA has been updated for more flexibility, staff award policy has been updated for additional recognition and acknowledgment, staff has specific roles in commencement, and staff is acknowledged in the HR and UHD newsletters.
 - A task force will be assigned to create a focus group to understand staff needs better and develop a timeline.
 - Evaluation, promotion, and advancement:
 - Comments include ensuring that internal positions are fair, giving managers more flexibility to promote, including staff in the revision of the annual evaluation to ensure affirmation, providing more funding (out of scope), and revising career ladders (out of scope).
 - Currently happening-career ladder education is offered, internal promotion information is shared, and the compensation policy has recently been updated for greater flexibility.
 - A task force will be assigned to create a focus group to understand staff needs better and develop a timeline.
 - Professional development:
 - Comments include staff wanting to be surveyed to identify needs (expanding), providing managers with management and leadership training (pending), developing staff retreats (partnership with Office of the President), providing employees should a professional development plan linked to their personal career goals, and provide additional support for employees enrolled in college.
 - Currently happening- Talent Development does survey employees on professional development and plans to expand, there is tuition reimbursement, and staff can apply for the Edge Award to attend professional development opportunities.
 - A task force will be assigned to create a focus group to understand staff needs better and develop a timeline.

Question: Is the Ombuds a paid position?

Answer: It is a paid position.

Question: Do promotions require degrees?

Answer: Not necessarily; it depends on the higher-level position that you aspire to get.

Question: Can you share how the career ladder is not required to be followed by policy? Perhaps in a future Staff Council, this would be helpful to go forward.

Answer: We encourage all managers to promote their employees. However, there are times when managers rather post the positions.

Question: You mentioned tuition reimbursement is fully used each year. Do we know how many or what percentage of staff are covered or denied due to funds?

Answer: I do not have that information, but I can get it for you to share with Staff Council. I know there is some employees that get waitlisted due to funding.

Question: Please expand on how the Gator Mentorship Program can be a part of professional development. Specifically, speak to how managers can help their staff learn and grow by encouraging them to engage fully.

Answer: The Gator Mentorship Program is for seasoned staff to be able to mentor and spend time with the newest gators. Mentees are mentored for a few weeks. We highly encourage our staff to participate, and managers to allow them to participate.

Question: They are forming a training and professional development committee for academic success advisors. Is there a key person in ESO we can connect with?

Answer: Absolutely, you can connect with Donnie Kesterson.

Mr. Kwasikpui thanks Mrs. Morales for her presentation. He reminds everyone the ESO will share the presentation.

Dr. Loren Blanchard, President University of Houston Downtown

Mr. Kwasikpui introduces Dr. Blanchard.

- Dr. Blanchard thanks Mr. Kwasikpui for his hard work as Staff Council President and looks forward to working with Mr. Sears as the 23-24 Staff Council President.
- Dr. Blanchard elaborates on his commitment to staff success, including compensation increases and professional development.
- Mr. Kwasikpui asked Dr. Blanchard if he could share some critical takeaways from Mrs. Morales's ESO presentation. Dr. Blanchard emphasizes the relationship between student enrollment and compensation increases. Enrollment targets being met or exceeded will provide opportunities for compensation increases. Enrollment funding in Texas is based on student credit hours and not head count.
- Dr. Blanchard elaborates that UHD University Advancement has been able to raise five million dollars. Funding is being applied toward student success and professional development. The UHD Office of Research and Sponsor Programs has staff that has been able to write grants that provide funding.
- Dr. Blanchard is also committed to effectively communicating with staff so they know what is happening in the university. The President's office sends various communications, ESO spotlights staff, and there is a new UHD magazine that will be delivered to offices that highlights staff achievements.
- Mr. Kwasikpui asked Dr. Blanchard if he could share one mindset about the importance and value of their work and contributions. Dr. Blanchard says that it would be, "Let your work speak for you."
- Mr. Kwasikpui shares information on the Social Media Summit being held at UHD on July 20th.

Mr. Kwasikpui thanks Dr. Blanchard for speaking at the Staff Council Meeting.

The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Kwasikpui at approximately 11:04 a.m.