



Staff Senate Meeting Minutes for September 2025

Date: Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Time: 10:02 AM

Location: ULIB 622 | Microsoft Teams for Guests

Attendees

Senators Present: Medria Buford, Steven Burnside, Keisha Chambless, Kelley Gentry, Jessica Griggs, Shonnie Hall-Trotter, Caitlyn Hilliard, Jennifer Huey, Molly McCullar, Dana Mejia, Stephanie Robinson, Alyse Smith, Sara Webb, Wesley Welch, Gina White, and Karen Worsley

Senators Excused: None

Senators Absent: none

Visitors: Nicole Walker, Katie Smith, Sabrina McClain, Jamie Mondragon, Deb Morse, Natalya Van, Allison Thompson, Samantha Hogan, Lauren Weatherford, Melissa Rhodes, Ida Gaines, Janet Goss, and Vicki Crist

Call to Order

- September 2025 Staff Senate Meeting called to order by President Sara Webb at **10:02 am**.
- Attendance sheet was circulated.

Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes

- **August meeting minutes** were reviewed.
- Motion to approve: **Senator Griggs**
- Seconded by: **Senator Webb**
- Motion passed unanimously.

Guest Speaker(s): President Dr. Castille

Topic: University Budget, Staff Morale, and Shared Governance

Highlights:

- Expressed appreciation for staff service and commitment.
- Addressed **budget deficit**:
 - FY2024 deficit: \$6 million
 - FY2025 deficit: \$12 million
 - Cuts made primarily from the **6th floor administration**, reducing VPs from 5 to 2, saving about \$1 million.
 - Emphasis on generating **additional revenue** (e.g., sports wagering bill estimated \$1.4–2.2 million; lease agreement with Louisiana Economic Development for the Lumen building).
- Reiterated that **further staff/faculty cuts are not planned** but the budget will remain tight.
- Upcoming **University Council** to launch before December:
 - Representation: 2 members from Staff Senate.
 - Focus areas: **Student success, staff development, and faculty development.**

- Purpose: Collaborative, transparent decision-making for long-term sustainability (to 2031 and beyond).

Discussion Points from Staff:

- Concerns over **staff workload**, burnout, and lack of compensation or comp time.
- Requests for:
 - Flexible work schedules and hybrid options.
 - Recognition and appreciation initiatives.
 - Transparent communication regarding cuts and hiring freezes.
- Dr. Castille's responses:
 - Acknowledged cultural and morale challenges.
 - Committed to consulting with **Dr. Graves (HR/Finance)** about comp time and overtime concerns.
 - Encouraged ideas for non-monetary recognition and staff appreciation.
 - Noted constraints from **Governor Landry's in-person work mandate**, but open to exploring flexibility where possible.
 - Emphasized transparent communication, acknowledging fear among staff regarding job security.

Additional Topics:

- Discussion of **program evaluation and right-sizing** the university based on:
 - Recruitment, retention, job placement.
- Collaboration with **ULM Foundation** to better align funding with needs.
- Partnerships and recruitment initiatives:
 - **Bridge Over the Bayou** partnership with Delta Community College.
 - Expansion of **international recruitment**, especially from Nepal.
- Dr. Castille emphasized **shared accountability** in recruitment and retention ("Every 110 students = \$1 million revenue").

Reports of Committees

- No reports this month.
- **Service Hours:** Senators reminded to log hours via the link emailed by Sarah.
- Committee chairs to schedule meetings prior to next session.

New Business

Vacancies:

- President's Office/Athletics seat filled by Molly McCullar (approved unanimously).
- Business Affairs seat (formerly held by Emma Norwood) now vacant—recommendations forthcoming.

University Council Representative: Senator Alyse Smith elected.

Committee Assignments

- **Staff Welfare and Handbook**
 - Committee Chair is Kelley Gentry. Members are Gina White, Stephanie Robinson, Medria Buford, Molly McCullar, and Keisha Chambless
- **Communications**
 - Committee Chair is Caitlyn Hilliard. Members are Jessica Griggs, Jennifer Huey, Shonnie Hall-Trotter, and Medria Buford

- **Constitution and Bylaws**
 - Committee Chair is Wesley Welch. Members are Jennifer Huey, Keisha Chambless, Stephanie Robinson, and Gina White
- **Elections**
 - Committee Chair is Caitlyn Hilliard. Members are Steven Burnside, Shonnie Hall-Trotter, Jessica Griggs, and Molly McCullar.

Announcements

- **New Contact Form:** “Contact Us” button added to Staff Senate website for anonymous staff submissions (comments, concerns, inquiries).
- **Volunteer Opportunity:** Staff Senate to volunteer at the **Food Bank** — proposed Friday in October (to be scheduled).
- **Homecoming Events:**
 - Alumni Association needs volunteers for **Good Morning Gala** and **Tailgate (12–2 PM)**.
 - Cash handling training available for volunteers.
 - Encouraged participation in **parade**; KEDM and Corey Crow to broadcast live.
- **Acknowledgments:** Senators thanked for open dialogue and honesty during the President’s Q&A.

Open Discussion

- Request for updated list of staff represented by each senator.
- Discussion of ways to improve communication and morale.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn: **Senator White**
- Seconded by: **Hall-Trotter**
- Meeting adjourned by President Webb at **11:12AM**.
- The next Staff Senate meeting will be on Wednesday, October 15th. at 10:00 am in the Library Conference Room 622.