

University Support Staff Senate

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

Minutes

PSU's University Support Staff Senate welcomes all, you do not have to be a Senator to attend.

Guests: Tarynn Brenner, Lori Scott Dreiling, Norman Philipp, Hannah Randall, Eva Sager

Senators Present: Tracey Eagon, Sean Hall, Michelle Hensley, Tonya Pentola Joe Sheehy, Cindy VanBecelaere, Heather Winzer, Carol Young

Senators Excused: none

Senators Absent: Wylie DeGruson, Jake Keltner, Keith Shively, Sara Sullivan, Ed Vanderbeck, Stephanie Willis

One Rap of the Gavel and President, Sean Hall called the regular USS Senate meeting to order at 1:31 pm January 8, 2025, in the Meadowlark room of Pittsburg State University's Overman Student Center.

December's meeting minutes were presented for review. Michelle Hensley moved to approve as submitted, Cindy VanBecelaere seconded no discussion, motion carries. Minutes are available on the USS Senate website (<https://www.pittstate.edu/faculty-staff/university-support-staff-senate/index.html>)

Other University Reports

Faculty Senate President Remarks: Norm Philipp – Updated Syllabus template for Spring 2025 courses shared out. Formed new subcommittee on AI under Academic Affairs, preparing for early April's (prior to KBOR visit) campus AI symposium, will have a seat of representation for PSU Staff Senate member. Now have a 3rd level for Non-Tenure Track Faculty Recognition Award. During break Norm has been working on a unified tuition assistance proposal for all Regents Institutions, taking down fences. Opening up professional development for everybody see attached document (**UTAP – Unified Tuition Assistance Program: Proposal to Extend Faculty Tuition Assistance Programs Across Kansas Board of Regents Institutions** Presented by the KBOR Council of Faculty Senate Presidents) that's gaining traction among the group. Slide Presentation available upon request.

- a. Unclassified Professional Senate (President-Elect) Remarks: Eva Sager – University Staff Senate meeting is today following President Dan Shipp's remarks. Did not have one on one with Dan, but following his presentation they hope to vote on the Staff Senate Bylaws.
- b. Student Government Association President Remarks: Hanna Eckstein absent – (Eva shared) It's been quiet while we were on break, they are gearing up for Spring Semester. Higher Ed day is February 12th at the Capital in Topeka. They are intentionally planning that attending students are in Legislators offices of their home districts to discuss OER, Mental Health and a 3rd topic escaping Eva at the moment. SGA is excited to add an 'Outstanding Staff Member' award to be announced during Go Pitt Fest. Big Event is Saturday of Go Pitt Fest week, and new SGA cabinet will be announced the following Sunday at their Leadership Awards.
- c. Human Resource Representatives: Lori Scott Dreiling, Tarynn Brenner and Hannah Randall. Tarynn reported that the entire HR office have been working on Professional Development Day, there's a booklet of all sessions available on their website and will be handed out Friday 8:30am-3pm, here in Overman Student Center.

Sean Hall and Michelle Hensley's meeting with President Shipp and Emily McElwain 1/8/25 was cancelled, on account of Dr. Shipp not feeling well. He will speak with all of us in a matter of moments in the Sunflower room.

The next Kansas Board of Regents USS-UPS Council Joint Meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2025.

Committee Reports:

- a. USS/UPS Handbook: Michelle Hensley, Joe Sheehy, Heather Winzer, next meeting to continue the Senate's 'Standard Operating Procedures' will occur within next couple of weeks.
- b. Satisfaction Survey: Heather Winzer reported the first joint Regents survey meeting is next Tuesday 1/14/25 to go over the survey questions and process. Each school has been asked to begin the compiling the list of employees who are eligible to participate in the survey as well as review the questions (request made in December, hopefully most of them have completed that task or are working on it). The goal is still to distribute the survey in April. The brief conversations with Docking Institute of Public Affairs at FHSU (distributor/report analyst of 2019, 2022, and this 2025 survey) have gone well. Will share more at our February meeting.
- c. Parking Committee: Stephanie Willis absent, Carol Young reported the committee conducted appeal business by email (there was only 1).
- d. Overman Student Center Board of Governors: Carol Young indicated next meeting is to be scheduled.
- e. Employee Initiatives Teams (EIT):
 - a. Kudos/Recognition: Carol Young (& Ed Meyer) – next meeting Wednesday January 15th to discuss and select t-shirt design. Hot Cocoa, Cider, Coffee and Tea were served in the Oval Monday December 2nd, Carol thought the event was appreciated, folks brought their own mugs and shared in the camaraderie. Remember the joy spread by Gorilla High Five cards.
 - b. Professional Development: Sean Hall – no meeting set, remember Staff PD day this Friday. Tracey Eagon reported that 140 people are registered for Friday, please know you are still welcome to come, all OSC rooms are set up appropriately, it should be a good day with plenty of good prizes to be given away.
 - c. Onboarding/Offboarding: Michelle Hensley – Hannah Randall noted that new Microsoft Teams groups have been set up recently for all EITs. Met the week prior to Winter Interim (although Michelle was not informed) to discuss 'stay-interviews' to be held on the 90th day of employment.
 - d. Employee Wellness + Wellbeing: Tracey Eagon and Carol Young – no meeting recently.
 - e. Performance Management: Sean Hall – not contacted yet. Again HR Leadership was present and more questions salary compression and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (aka union 'agreement') and USS employee Handbook points were discussed.

Old Business:

1. None beyond previous conversation.

New Business:

1. Guest Speaker: Dan Shipp with both USS and UPS Senates (notes taken, included below)

Good of the Order:

- a. Staff Professional Development Day, Friday January 10th 2025 top floor of Overman Student Center 8:30am – 3:00pm. Come – you are more than welcome.
- b. Next meeting: Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 1:30 pm in OSC Meadowlark Room

Cindy VanBecelaere motioned to adjourn, Heather Winzer seconded, with one rap of the gavel President Sean Hall concluded our meeting at 1:52 pm, encouraging us to join UPS Senate next door.

At 2pm University Professional Staff Senate President Kelley Manley began the meeting awaiting Dr. Shipp's entry by opening the floor for questions for the PSU Staff Senate Bylaws committee (Michael Woodrum, Heather Winzer, Shawna Witherspoon, Joe Sheehy, Eva Sager, Michelle Hensley) many of

which were all in the room, copies are available at the door, UPS Senate plans to vote on these Bylaws following Dan's remarks. Seeing none, Michael reported exactly what Heather shared at the USS Senate meeting regarding the Employee Satisfaction Survey meeting with the five other Regents Institutions, adding that once the survey is released in April employees will likely be given one week to complete it. PSU has led the schools with a 60% completion rate in years past, encouraging colleagues to answer the 'longitudinal' questions is wise showcasing trends and facts within the decade time span. It was during this explanation Dan arrived and began to chat. Our campus president shared not only how important the survey is, but also taking the input and doing something with it. Remember that at PSU all of the EIT teams are a result from this basis. He is quite excited about Professional Development Day '2' (32 sessions scheduled with 43 presenters), put LinkedIn to use. He spoke about the increased funding requests for three regional institutions, recent meetings with Governor Laura Kelley and the State Budget Director, as well as advancing strategies and making progress. When asked about our concerns, compensation compression was brought up. Dan replied indicating work is in progress internally to begin addressing gaps. Explicit thanks for our administrative time off given during the holiday break was shared. At 2:43 Dan (and others, myself included) departed while the UPS senate meeting continued.

Minutes submitted by Recording Secretary Heather Winzer.

UTAP – Unified Tuition Assistance Program: Proposal to Extend Faculty Tuition Assistance Programs Across Kansas Board of Regents Institutions

Presented by the KBOR Council of Faculty Senate Presidents

Introduction The Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) oversees six state universities: Emporia State University (ESU), Fort Hays State University (FHSU), Kansas State University (KSU), Pittsburg State University (PSU), Wichita State University (WSU), and the University of Kansas (KU) / KU Medical Center (KUMC). Each institution currently offers a tuition assistance program to their faculty and staff, providing opportunities for professional and academic development. However, these programs are inconsistent across the institutions. With the majority limiting eligibility to the courses and degree programs offered by the employing institution. This proposal seeks to extend tuition assistance eligibility to include courses and degree programs from any of the KBOR universities, fostering greater collaboration and maximizing the benefits of the tuition assistance program.

Rationale

1. **Enhanced Educational Opportunities:** Expanding eligibility would allow faculty and staff to access a broader range of courses and degree programs, enabling them to pursue academic interests or professional development opportunities not offered at their home institution.
2. **Increased Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Allowing faculty and staff to engage with peers across institutions would promote cross-university collaboration, strengthening the academic community within the KBOR system.
3. **Workforce Development:** Access to diverse educational offerings can help faculty and staff enhance their skills, contributing to more effective teaching, research, and administration across all institutions.
4. **Retention and Recruitment:** A more flexible tuition assistance program would serve as a significant incentive for attracting and retaining talented professionals within the KBOR system.

5. **Opportunity to Lead in Higher Education Innovation:** By adopting this policy, KBOR has the unique opportunity to set a national example in higher education. While many institutions and states offer inter-institutional tuition exchange programs for students, few have implemented such initiatives for faculty and staff. This would position Kansas as a leader in fostering professional development and institutional collaboration, elevating the reputation of the KBOR system and its universities.
6. **Alignment with Broader Educational and Economic Goals:** This program supports KBOR's commitment to improving statewide educational outcomes and advancing economic development. By providing faculty and staff access to a wider range of academic programs, the initiative fosters continuous professional growth, leading to enhanced educational quality across institutions. Furthermore, a highly educated workforce is a critical driver of economic growth. Faculty and staff who develop new skills or earn advanced degrees can contribute more effectively to research, innovation, and student success, aligning with Kansas' economic goals of building a competitive and thriving workforce.
7. **Building on KBOR's State-Wide General Education Initiative:** The proposed tuition assistance program aligns with the principles of KBOR's state-wide general education initiative, which facilitates seamless credit transfer across Kansas public institutions. This initiative underscores KBOR's dedication to reducing barriers to education and enhancing academic mobility. Extending this philosophy to faculty and staff development ensures that KBOR continues to lead in creating equitable and innovative educational frameworks that benefit the entire academic community.

Relevant Examples Several other academic systems provide examples of collaborative tuition programs that support cross-institutional enrollment:

1. **Council of Independent Colleges Tuition Exchange Program (CIC-TEP):** This program connects over 440 member colleges and universities, offering tuition-free enrollment to full-time employees and their family members across participating institutions. CIC-TEP demonstrates how institutions can collaborate to provide expansive educational opportunities for their employees.¹
2. **University of Missouri System:** The University of Missouri System enables eligible employees to receive a 75% tuition waiver on courses across any of its campuses. This system-wide benefit facilitates professional development and education for employees without being limited to their home institution.
3. **Big Ten Academic Alliance:** Some institutions within the Big Ten Academic Alliance provide tuition assistance programs for employees that include cross-institutional enrollment provisions. For instance, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln offers an Employee Scholarship Program, allowing employees to take courses at other campuses in the alliance under specific conditions.

¹ Fourteen (14) participating institutions in the State of Kansas: Baker University (Baldwin City, KS), Benedictine College (Atchinson, KS), Bethany College (Lindsborg, KS), Bethel College (North Newton, KS), Friends University (Wichita, KS), Kansas Wesleyan University (Salina, KS), McPherson College (McPherson, KS), MidAmerica Nazarene University (Olathe, KS), Newman University (Wichita, KS), Ottawa University (Ottawa, KS), Southwestern College (Winfield, KS), Sterling College (Sterling, KS), Tabor College (Hillsboro, KS), University of Saint Mary (Leavenworth, KS)

4. **University of Kansas – Third Party Tuition Assistance:** This program allows employees to receive tuition assistance for courses at third-party institutions, contingent upon course completion and submission of required documentation. It demonstrates an effective framework for ensuring accountability and facilitating professional growth.

These examples highlight successful models of inter-institutional collaboration in tuition assistance, reinforcing the feasibility and potential benefits of a similar initiative within the KBOR system.

Proposed Policy Changes

1. **Eligibility:** Faculty and staff employed by any of the six KBOR universities would be eligible to apply their tuition assistance benefits from their employing university to courses and degree programs offered at of the KBOR universities.
2. **Cost-Sharing Model:** Tuition costs for cross-university courses and degree programs could be shared between the employing institution and the institution offering the program, based on an agreed-upon framework.
3. **Administrative Collaboration:** Universities would collaborate to create a streamlined application and approval process, ensuring that faculty and staff can easily enroll in courses and degree programs across institutions.
4. **Credit Transfer and Program Compatibility:** Efforts would be made to ensure that credits earned under the expanded tuition assistance program are fully transferable and applicable to degree or certificate programs within the KBOR system.

Implementation Plan

1. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Consult with university presidents, chief academic officers, faculty and staff representatives, academic units, and financial aid offices to refine the proposal and address potential concerns.
2. **Policy Framework Development:** Work with KBOR administrators to establish a formal policy and cost-sharing agreements between institutions.
3. **Pilot Program:** Launch a pilot program allowing cross-institution tuition assistance for a limited number of participants, gathering data to assess feasibility, participation rates, and outcomes.
4. **Full Implementation:** Based on pilot results, implement the expanded tuition assistance program across all six KBOR universities.

Anticipated Benefits

- **Broader Access to Specialized Courses and Degree Programs:** Faculty and staff can benefit from unique programs and courses not available at their home institution.
- **Professional Growth:** Improved access to academic resources will enhance professional development opportunities.
- **Strengthened Institutional Collaboration:** Fostering inter-university connections will enrich the academic environment across the KBOR system.
- **Increased Equity:** Faculty and staff at smaller universities will have the same access to diverse educational opportunities as those at larger institutions.

- **National Recognition:** KBOR can establish itself as a trailblazer in faculty and staff development by implementing a forward-thinking and collaborative tuition assistance program.

Conclusion Expanding the tuition assistance program to encompass all degree programs at KBOR universities represents a forward-thinking approach to professional development, collaboration, and workforce enhancement. By leveraging the collective strengths of our state institutions, we can better support the academic and professional aspirations of faculty and staff while strengthening the KBOR system as a whole.

We respectfully request the support of the KBOR Council of Presidents & Council of Chief Academic Officers before submitting the proposal to the Kansas Board of Regents to review and approve, thus enhancing the tuition assistance program for the benefit of all faculty and staff within the KBOR system.

Links to tuition assistance program documents by university:

KU	https://policy.ku.edu/human-resources/tuition-assistance-policy
KSU	https://www.k-state.edu/policies/ppm/4800/4870.html
WSU	https://www.wichita.edu/about/policy/ch_03/ch3_42.php
FHSU	https://www.fhsu.edu/policies/pdf/9-2024-tuition-assistance-policy.pdf
ESU	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AoS0COn4tElgn9abWKZcA_zipOnq1_wt/view
PSU	https://www.pittstate.edu/hr/benefits/employee-tuition-assistance-program.html https://www.pittstate.edu/office/provost/files/documents/knea-documents/psu-knea-agreement-2023-2025-final.pdf
KUMC	https://www.kumc.edu/academic-and-student-affairs/departments/registrar-office/tuition-and-fees/staff-and-staff-dependent-rates.html