Agenda for Staff Council Meeting
July 14, 2021

1. Call to order
2. Update from Human Resources – Colleen Dutton, Chief Human Resources Officer
3. Roll Call
4. Review of the June minutes
5. Welcome new member
6. Recognize Scholarship Winners
7. Committee Reports
   a. Executive Board
   b. Attendance Report
   c. Student Government
   d. Benefits Committee
   e. Communications Committee
   f. Fundraising Committee
   g. Staff Development Committee
   h. Secretary/Treasurer’s Report
   i. Faculty Senate Report
   j. Retiree Association update
8. University Wide Committees
9. UT System Committee Report- Employee Advisory Council
10. Proposals

2020-30p - "Faculty are sent an Evaluation of Academic Administrators. Why is this not also sent to Staff for review? It seems that the all staff email list is not being included on pertinent email communications." (Executive Board)

2020-32p: The responses from the Parking and Transportation Office and its leaders at the HR Forum, Academic Senate meeting, Staff Council meeting, and other public forums have been disappointing and at times, dismissive. The excuse of "we have to pay for the debt and upkeep of the garages" is wearing thin and thanking those employees who elected/had to purchase a FY2020-21 permit is insulting. Once we pivoted to remote
work, employees who were fortunate enough to be able to work remotely were NOT ALLOWED to be on campus so we COULD NOT use the parking permits that we purchased for the remainder of the academic year (March-August 2020). The institution decided to not refund the staff (and faculty) any portion of the parking permit price although they did refund the students. Now that employees are being told to begin transitioning back to campus, we have to purchase parking permits again. Though the permits are prorated, why do we have to buy new permits when we never got to utilize our permits from last year? Permits are not cheap and with ALL the challenges we all have had to face this past year, the least UTD could do is not make us pay for parking. Why is the burden being placed on employees (staff and faculty) to pay for the maintenance and debt for the parking lots and garages? How does this help boost the morale of employees who are all overworked and burned out mentally and physically? I strongly suggest Staff Council write a resolution about the parking permit issue so more attention can be given to this issue and the resolution can be escalated to university leadership. Staff Council should use its collective voice to make university leadership understand the concerns that staff has and not just brush aside our concerns. (Executive Board)

2020-33p: One of my constituents sent me the following article about the future of work-from-home at Duke University (https://today.duke.edu/2021/04/remote-work-future-duke). I have heard a number of people express their desire to have this option and to have university leadership seriously consider this option. Over the past year, students and faculty have been asked for their thoughts/preferences on a wide range of topics but staff has not been asked for our thoughts about any topics. As this past year has amply proven that there are some offices/positions that can work remotely and be more productive, staff should be given an opportunity to let leadership know quantitatively and qualitatively if there is broad support for a more robust work-from-home program. As the representative body for staff, we should consider doing something similar to what Duke did, i.e. sending a survey to staff focusing on work-from-home questions. I realize that the university will conduct a climate survey but the survey will not occur for quite some time and it will not have a focus on this topic. This may open the conversation. I look forward to your thoughts.

11. Suggestions
2020-29s: Staff Council should continue to do all meetings virtually indefinitely.
Tabling until September.

2020-31s: Hello, I am having an issue where I believe that eviCore, as contracted with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas to review requests for certain services, is failing to properly administer my employee health benefits. I was wondering if other employees are dealing with this type of issue (or other issues) related to eviCore? There seems to be some issue with
communication that could lead to a solution, and I know that if we don't voice an issue it won't get fixed. If I am not the only one with this issue, do we need to take this to UT System as a bigger issue that needs resolution? Thank you for your consideration.

Response from HR:

OEB’s Response:

“Good morning Marita – Evicore was the prior service provider contracted with BCBSTX who reviewed certain services to authorize treatment. However, effective January 1, 2021, AIM became the new service provider for BCBSTX and took over that responsibility.

We agree that on occasion we heard complaints about delays by Evicore which in extreme cases even resulted in services needing to be rescheduled. Those situations were extremely frustrating to members. In other cases we heard member’s had a difficult time providing documentation adequate to satisfy the clinical requirements of the service, even though the physician had shared materials which they felt easily justified the service(s).

Since January 2021 with AIM taking over the function, we’ve had a couple of reports of things not being approved which were somewhat a surprise. That said, BCBS reviewed the cases (they seemed to involve imaging services) to make sure AIM evaluated the services consistent with BCBSTX’s clinical policy and consistent with the UT SELECT Medical plan provisions. Based upon a relatively low number of appeals submitted to OEB, we believe the services provided by AIM reflect a reasonable level of efficiency. We’re always open to reviewing appeals for services that were denied, and of course the appeals process must be consistent with the guidelines established by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

As for the remark below about asking others for their experience, I feel like that’s not a good idea for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, it’s not good practice to encourage individuals to share their personal health information. This is an individual’s private situation, so any action which encourages someone to share their experience related to a health condition is likely to run up against a whole host of issues involving HIPAA related concerns, etc.

What we find to be helpful is for a participant to reach out to BCBSTX and share with them their concerns regarding their specific case. If the service is denied (different from “need additional information”), then appeal documentation should be submitted to BCBSTX consistent with the ACA Level One appeal process. If the Level One appeal is denied, then the service can be appealed to OEB in the Level Two appeal. I want to share that with these types of service appeals it’s very important that all appeals be handled consistent with Federal guidelines (ACA).
If the participant below would like to OEB to research their case, we can make outreach to BCBS and get a status on the pre-determination. If the service is still in limbo awaiting a final determination, we may be able to help by getting clarification of if BCBS is awaiting additional information, if it’s under review, or if it’s been approved or denied and on what basis. We could work individually with the member if that’s helpful.

2020-34s: Hello, I have been seeing my therapy counselor long before the pandemic. But this past March 2021 this changed. I received a letter from BlueCross stating that my counselor was no longer being supported by the insurance, meaning I would be charged to full amount if I continued seeing her. After researching this, it was not BlueCross making this change. UTD decided to only have certain counselors, Magellan Providers, who are required to charge less. This is to save money for the university. I'm not saying these people provide less of a service because they charge less. It just seems insensitive on the University part to pulling back benefits in mental health during this time where mental health is at an all time low. Thank you for your time and hard work.

2020-35s: Dear Council Members, Soon after Covid started back in 2020, the University stopped giving promotion/appraisal to staff. Now after more than a year, when things have almost gone back to normal, we are still not given the minimum increment (3%) during contract extension (in spite of being paid by own project money and not by the University), or allowed a change in our job title, even without any increment in salary. This is really unfortunate and is affecting numerous young professionals who have only started to build their career, let alone the struggle to survive with the minimum wages provided in academia. It has become extremely frustrating and demotivating, and I did not find any suitable channel to voice my opinion. Can the staff council raise this issue to the respective authorities?

2020-36s: I have a question about how my email address was changed in my UTSW mychart account? It was changed from my personal email to my edu address without my knowledge causing me to miss an important notice regarding an appointment.

12. Continuing Business
   Last year there was a lot of discussion about an additional staff award, can we get an update?

13. New Business: Concern brought to the Executive Board
   a. Staff Council representatives seem extremely tone deaf to the concerns of the staff they represent. The response of "we have other items we should take up" in response to suggestions/concerns is ridiculous. There is a huge lack of empathy and disregard for others. It seems Staff Council doesn't follow through on anything or do anything period. What has staff council done for the Staff they represent? It seems things just get swept under the rug and no positive progress is
being made for the Staff at UT Dallas. Really disappointing and adds to poor morale.

14. Reminders

Next Staff Council Meeting – August 11, 2021 @ 9AM
Elections: Are currently taking place. Please vote and encourage your districts to vote.
Budget and Finance: