



# University Staff Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, September 10, 2024  
Tyler Haynes Commons, Room 305  
[Zoom Link](#)

In attendance:

Miriam Blackmon, Holly Blevins, Ashley Blount, Amanda Boyd, Matt Dewald, Kolby Ferguson, Meghan Gill, Emily Griffey Ewees, Andrew Ilnicki, Somiah Lattimore, Erin Lowery, Lisa Matthews Ailsworth, Mirinda McCants, Derek Miller, Jess Oliver, Cort Schneider, Wendy Sheppard, John Shines, Kirstin Stacia, Laura Thompson, Julia Trachtenberg, Darrell Tyler, Andrea Vest, Mary Wheaton, Susan Wolski, Justin Woodson, Carole Yeatts, Mina Zatelli

1. The meeting is called to order at 1:02 by Carole Yeatts.

Welcome by Carole. She explained why the meeting was moved and that it will be in THC 305 for the meetings for the rest of the year (correction: Nov. and Dec. meetings will be in THC 310).

- Derek Miller introduced himself, the 2023-24 USAC Chair, Ex-Officio Member.
- The last meeting minutes were posted on the website. Motion was made by John Shines to approve last month's meeting minutes. Seconded by Cort Schneider. Meeting minutes were adopted. The minutes will be emailed to members from now on.

2. Reports from committees and liaisons:

- *Miriam Blackmon, Planning & Priorities Representative* – P&P meets twice a month.
- *Darrell Tyler – other P&P Rep*, joining Ashley Kuemmerle as staff representative
- *John Shines, Plant Involvement Team Liaison (PIT)* - They handle issues with the physical plant, construction, speed bumps, etc., present physical issues. Updates for PIT: OT procedures in Facilities are being addressed. There are not enough drivers for recycling, and a new company will be picking up recycling – signage will be sent out to all locations for students and staff.
- Dining services and Facilities will come together to liaise about issues on campus, cover more ground and distribute more information. Merging for topics and safety to promote transparency; they are not sharing a budget, just addressing issues.
- *Amanda Boyd, Food Service Involvement Team (FIT)* – 10-12 people from HDC and retail came to a meeting, safety issues are a concern. They need to have better communication with hourly employees sent to HDC staff who do not have the opportunity to read emails – need a solution to improve communications with hourly staff, sharing more information about events. There is a concern that there are no lights in the back parking lot when they arrive early, and they have to walk to the front because there is no swipe on the door for entrance in the back. Peacock attack was a concern. Very involved meeting with a lot of discussion. The new facility by the gym, Flavor is very good.
- *Jess Oliver, Liaison to Benefits Committee* – They discuss all benefits for University staff; medical benefits for 25-26 year are being discussed. Mary Wheaton asked who is the staff rep for the Benefits Committee - Frank Allen.
- *Dr. Cort Schneider, Faculty Senate Liaison* – They need to create some spaces for mingling to bridge gaps and look for commonality. Carole noted that USAC shared their goals with the Faculty Senate.

They were very receptive and excited. Joyce Janto is the Faculty Senate President – with their meeting on Friday afternoons, would like to meet with USAC. The meetings are on Friday afternoons because of class times. USAC members would prefer a breakfast or lunch gathering, but that would be difficult for faculty. Miriam Blackmon suggested that we meet on a Friday afternoon one semester, and then at a different time another semester.

- *Mary Wheaton, Communications Committee* – The committee's focus is on disseminating information about activities – access to all socials, Facebook and Instagram. Mary put together a flyer about how to submit web submissions with QR code, and will need volunteers to hang up the flyers.
- *Wendy Sheppard, Vice-Chair* - gave an update on the current election for the open seat for Advancement. There are 3 nominees with one week from today to vote. USAC still needs a chair for the Elections Committee.
- *Justin Woodson, Volunteer Committee Co-Chair* - They will send out volunteers for events on campus; scavenger hunt and campus tours, wear USAC nametag to campus events.
- *Ashley Blount, Chair of Events committee* – Jennifer Phillips and Julia Trachtenberg will focus on tours, and deciding between EventBrite or Sign Up Genius, Mina Zatelli and Mirinda McCants will be looking into scavenger hunts. There is a need for swag other than a water bottle to get staff interested.
- *Carole Yeatts, USAC Chair* gave a brief about expectations for future events.
- *Kirstin Stacia, Treasurer Report* - \$5875 to start the year; spent \$123.50 for nametags, now have a balance of \$5751.50. There are funds available for other swag.
- Amanda Boyd posed the question about representation for Print Shop and a few other staff departments. Derrek Miller pointed out that they are currently covered by the Business Affairs At Large Representative.

3. Web submissions - Wendy Sheppard read a summary of the Web submissions and the responses.

**Idea/Question:** *Any plans to increase the number of EV charging stations on campus? Some of our larger buildings (with larger parking lots) do not have charging stations (C70, C66, W85, W87, W93).*

**Rationale/Reason:** *Faculty, students, and guests are driving EVs. Let's support the Green Spiders.*

**Response:** *Thank you for the question on electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Since 2021, the University has doubled the number of EV charging stations on campus, with 2 dual-port charging stations (four parking spots) added this year alone. There are now 9 level 2 charging stations at 7 locations on campus capable of charging 16 vehicles simultaneously (learn more [here](#)). Given the increase in EV usage, an informal user group came together to discuss EV needs at the end of the spring semester. At the suggestion of this group, the Sustainability & Environmental Awareness Committee and partners in Parking & Transportation Services will take up the charge of examining this issue. That work will begin this fall.*

**Idea/Question:** *The re-usable HDC-to-go containers seem to be working really well. Has there been any thought given to re-usable packaging (even better if non-plastic) at any of the dining locations,*

**Rationale/Reason:** *Faculty, students, and guests are driving EVs. Let's support the Green Spiders.*

**Rationale/Reason:** *The example I am most familiar with is salads at Lou's, and I feel like it could be possible to have a similar system to the HDC takeout containers. This would be better for the environment and I am sure there are enough people who are concerned about the environmental and/or health impacts of plastic that an option to get some menu items at dining locations in re-usable non-plastic containers would be well received -*

*even if there is a deposit or small cost. I know I for one would be happy to pay a \$5 deposit to get my salads in plastic-free packaging. There are also some startups that are managing food packaging recycling systems for campuses like Reusables.*

**Response:** *Thank you for your inquiry about reusable containers in Dining Services. We are always looking for ways to make our services more sustainable and have continuing conversations on this topic. Our purchasing team has been researching options for the past year and is working with Rethink Waste to determine viable options.*

*The green plastic boxes at the Heilman Dining Center are BPA-free and composed of NSF-approved materials. We wash and sanitize the reusable boxes on-site in the dining hall dish room, an operation unique to HDC. While we do not have the infrastructure to handle the cleaning and sanitization of reusable containers at the retail locations, we have switched over 100% to compostable drinkware, utensils, and straws at all retail and concession locations.*

*We will continue to look for an affordable alternative to plastic and are committed to continuing to reduce the use of plastics in the future as we shift our operations towards more sustainable container usage at all dining locations.*

*Thank you again for your inquiry. Please know that sustainability is a top priority for our operations, and we are working diligently towards continuous improvement.*

*Upen Malani, Executive Director of Dining Services*

- Ashley Blount asked Amanda Boyd what is used for salads. She said that the packaging is compostable. The cost of the packaging is very expensive. Everything at Flavor is compostable; being in the wellness building promotes sustainability. Covid set back the sustainability efforts for Dining Services. They are continuing to work toward fully compostable or recyclable packaging.

**Idea/Question:** Why did the university have to open on Labor Day?

**Rationale/Reason:** The university should have closed that day like other businesses. There was a professor who complained about it.

**Response:** Thank you for your question regarding why we do not close on Labor Day. It is important to note that as an academic institution, especially one that has a significant residential student population, it is not possible for the University to “close” any day of the year. Certain staff members and offices provide service for the University 365 days of the year. As folks know, there are many staff members and offices at the University who are able to take the Labor Day Holiday.

Moreover, unlike traditional businesses, our operational decisions are driven by the need to maintain a rigorous and balanced academic schedule that best supports student learning and fulfills academic accreditation standards for class hours.

It’s important to note that holding classes on Labor Day is not unique to our university; many of our peer institutions also remain open on this day. The fall academic calendar traditionally has 70 instructional days. Were we to give Labor Day off, we would need to add an additional instructional day elsewhere or students would miss out on a Monday of Monday/Wednesday classes or of Monday-only classes, which could impact student learning opportunities.

Our academic year has begun before Labor Day, with classes in session on that day, since 1976, and we do not envision changing our academic calendar.

- Discussion about why the campus was open on Labor Day – Dr. Schneider commented that it's not absolute, not all open or closed, open sort-of, faculty and disability services have to be open, dining services need to be open, some staff do have the day off; the policy is confusing, not "all open"; Wendy Sheppard commented that the question was posed by a faculty member who did not like that staff had the day off; the Help Desk was open, Holly Blevins submitted the question for clarification for the faculty; Mirinda McCants pointed out that the Help Desk is open to support the academic needs of the University; comment by Somiah Lattimore the Provost Office, Sr. Director Creativity, Innovation & Entrepreneurship – this has been a point of contention for a while. Hourly employees are paid holiday pay; Dr. Schneider – this is a communication issue about who is here or not here; because it is teaching day, Disability Services has to tend to students and hold appointments; Students do not see the University as closed.
- Meghan Gill suggested that one of the 70 of instruction days be swapped out for a day during fall break. Some groups allow the staff to take an extra day at another time. Erin Lowery pointed out that Labor Day is not the only day that causes these issues and has inconsistencies or lack of clarity, and transparency. Not sure if this is a specific holiday that USAC needs to take up – always has been an ongoing issue.
- Carole Yeatts called a break at 2:00 pm for committees to meet while we wait for Marco Ortiz to come.

#### 4. Call back to order at 2:12.

- *Marco A. Ortiz, Executive Director, Weinstein Learning Center* – He came here from University of Arizona, talked about himself and the approach to clarify the purpose of the WLC – student-centered – building back from the students, meeting their needs, in a stellar way – foundations are growth mindset, asset-based approach; in communications, marketing and consulting training growth mindset, normalize the use of resources for students – not to only be used when they are struggling; always look for new ways to serve the students as the student population changes; use data to inform decision-making, pushes the team to look for evidence that a change will make a difference;
- This year, integrating previous centers into one unit, naming conventions which encompass writing, speech, technology, academic skills, and quantitative resources; want faculty and student input about what the services to provide and then choose a meaningful name; the students have ownership of their work and they are given guidance; processes and procedures need to be standardized across all centers; i.e. recruitment of consultants needs to be standardized and consistent; best consultants may not be the students with the best grades – need a way to identify the best consultants (up to 200); making progress toward their goals – position the WLC to promote students to succeed academically – developing D Flyers; want to spread the word to build programming that will be integrated after the space is done.
- Workday will complicate things. In the process of moving operations to the Slate Platform for scheduling, checking students in and data collection; improving views for students and faculty to improve accessibility; need to meet students where they are.
- Want to create a community of peer educators, not just technology consultants; want to provide professional development and training certifications for peer tutors; to engage in best practices for student tutoring; allows tutors to put their level on their LinkedIn, internationally recognized certification; coaching on growth mindset for strength-based approaches; creates belonging and community.

*Mr. Ortiz Took questions:*

- Carole Yeatts asked about the formation of the Weinstein Learning Center – Answer: the Gift/Endowment enabled the centralization of these tutors; for the benefit of the students.
- Matt DeWald compared it to the consolidation of the health services, recreation, wellness, and CAPS into Weinstein Health and Wellness.
- Erin Lowery – question about looking at data, and normalizing using the WLC; what does the data show? Answer - Data right now is more anecdotal; who is hired, who uses services, hours of operation, embedded, drop-in, appointments, etc. what works best? Collecting the data will be powerful for the campus.
- Slate – admissions and enrollment management are currently using Slate (has demographic data); Learning Center Management is a separate module that is being developed to improve processes and scheduling; more oversight and more conducive to learning.
- Erin Lowery – suggested that Marco meet with the Dean of Career Services for synergies.
- Mirinda McCants asked if faculty and staff could use the center and services. The answer is that the center is very student-focused.
- Dr. Schneider asked if WLC will be open through finals or the end of classes. Answer - Looking into that, tapering off, but should still be open; will communicate through the webpage.
- Carole Yeatts - how have students changed in the last 5 years? Answer: Don't assume that the student has the skills; coaching is important, not just content tutoring; quantitative skills or academic skills; help the students to understand where to get help; time management, and note-taking skills; currently have professionals doing the consulting, but intend to have peer academic coaches in the future. Trends – traditional methods sometimes don't work; may need asynchronous resources, etc. – need to adapt with focus on person to person interaction.
- Kirstin Stacia asked about the Syllabus insert: Answer is that all faculty were asked to include it to describe what services are provided.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm.