

To the Staff:

As I complete my year as the Chair of the Staff Senate, I'm writing this note to update you on the role of Staff Senate and on the projects in which we have been involved.

The role of the Staff Senate is to both serve and represent the staff of the university and we have had a number of opportunities to do that over the past year. Staff Senate members have served you in the Bean during our pre-session meal together and at the Christmas Mingle & Jingle event. We have represented you at a number of important committees and conversations. In addition to the normal review of proposed university policy that Staff Senate, members have been present and participating in discussions about the university's budget, our benefits package, and the upcoming construction projects on our campus.

This year, for the first time, the Senate also took on a number of research projects which we believe will lead to several new initiatives in the coming year:

- Two of our subcommittees tackled a project to examine how other senates at other institutions are structured and potentially, recommend changes to the structure of the senate itself. This project resulted in a realization that ACU's Staff Senate is unique amongst like institutions in its composition and structure. A recommendation out of these committees were made to craft a plan to make Staff Senate a representative body, electing representatives from each division across campus, as opposed to the 10 exempt and 10 non-exempt at-large senators we have now. Next year's Senate will be taking up this issue in more detail.
- Another subcommittee proposed a plan for the Senate to recognize individuals and departments who provide outstanding service to fellow staff members, faculty, and our students. This proposal has been presented to Senior Leadership Team and could be implemented next year pending the securing of funding.
- A third subcommittee proposed a service day where staff would receive a "holiday" during Spring Break for the specific purpose of finding a service opportunity on campus or within Abilene. This proposal has been sent to Wendy Jones in Human Resources for further consideration.
- A fourth subcommittee sent a survey to the campus to evaluate the benefits information sessions hosted by Human Resources and determine if the sessions were effective and useful to employees.
- Finally, the last subcommittee did research on employee usage of the university's retirement benefit and made recommendations to Human Resources about how to better market the benefit to the staff.

As this year concludes and as I hand the chair to Chris Riley, it is my hope that the Staff Senate continues to be a vital part of the decision-making of the university. In this time of challenges and obstacles, I found myself constantly encouraged by this year's Staff Senators, who were willing to take on projects outside of their regular jobs and who looked for ways to serve all of us in exemplary ways.

Bart Herridge