

## STAFF SENATE BYLAWS AND PROCEDURES

### PREAMBLE

The University of Tennessee Health Science Center Staff (UT Health Science Center) Senate is created by the authority of the University Chancellor and reports directly to the chancellor or chancellor's designee(s). The Staff Senate will combine the members of the Employee Relations Committee (ERC) and the Exempt Staff Council (ESC) for UT Health Science Center. This body will represent all non-exempt and exempt staff at UT Health Science Center. The ERC and ESC will remain intact for systemic alignment with the University of Tennessee System-wide (UT) Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) according to UT Policy HR0630 Employee Relations Advisory Organizations.

As a representative shared governance organization, the Staff Senate serves as an advisory body to the Chancellor and Chancellor's cabinet regarding university policies, procedures, and long-range plans pertinent to UT staff. This body serves as a conduit of information to and from the Chancellor and Chancellor's cabinet about matters affecting staff as a whole and matters related to the performance of their work in support of institutional goals. The Staff Senate appoints or recommends representatives to university committees, upon request.

The Staff Senate is a forum for members to communicate with one another on matters of mutual interest or concern. This body communicates with constituents about issues, policies, and activities affecting them. The Staff Senate is primarily a body focusing on advocacy for its constituents, both in partnership with institutional leadership and as a body acting on its own accord.

The Staff Senate does not serve as a substitute for the formal grievance procedures of the university. It does not engage in specific individual or group/employer disputes or grievances and does not serve as a bargaining entity.

### SECTION I – MISSION

The official motto for the Staff Senate is: "Your Voice, Our Mission."

The mission of the Staff Senate shall be:

- to serve as a vehicle to share staff issues and concerns with UT Health Science Center administration;
- to improve engagement with the university's constituencies and UT Health Science Center administrators;
- to foster communication within the campus community; and
- to advance the university's mission, vision, and strategic plan.

## **SECTION II – THE COMPOSITION OF STAFF SENATE: MEMBERSHIP DEFINITIONS**

The Staff Senate will consist of representatives, exempt and non-exempt, from each of the colleges and administrative units that make up the senate. Staff Senate size is based on the total number of professional staff members within each college and administrative unit.

Colleges and administrative units are as follows:

- College of Dentistry
- College of Graduate Health Sciences
- College of Health Professions
- College of Medicine
- College of Nursing
- College of Pharmacy
- Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs
- Division of Operations and Finance
- Office of Research

The Staff Senate Officers shall consist of a President, President-elect, Parliamentarian, Secretary, Communications Coordinator, Membership and Assessment Coordinator, Employee Engagement Coordinator, and Employee Relations Advisory Board Representatives. The Staff Senate Executive Committee (Executive Committee) shall consist of the Staff Senate Officers, the Past-President (ex-officio), and a representative from Human Resources (ex-officio).

### **Voting and non-voting members**

Voting Senators shall consist of staff members elected to the Staff Senate.

Non-voting members shall consist of:

- The current president unless the vote is needed as a tie breaker.
- Ex-officio members of the staff senate.
- Guests of the staff senate.
- Staff senate officers.

### SECTION III – OPERATING PROCEDURES

The following procedures outline the classification, details, processes, and best practices for operations of the Staff Senate at the UT Health Science Center.

**Bylaws, updates, and changes:** The Membership and Assessment Committee will conduct an annual review of the Staff Senate Bylaws and Procedures by end of October each year and provide a report to the Staff Senate about any adjustments in procedure that may be required at that time. Amendments can be proposed at any time throughout the year. This document is subject to change with a simple majority vote of voting senate members.

**Membership Eligibility and Allocation:** Membership of the Staff Senate shall consist of full or part time benefits-eligible staff employees that have served at the UT Health Science Center for a minimum of one year prior to the start of their term. The Executive Committee can make exceptions for units that do not have an eligible/available candidate that can fulfill the one-year requirement if the nominee has been employed for at least six (6) months at the UT Health Science Center – preference will be given to candidates that have been employed for eight to ten (8-10) months.

- (1) Eligible individuals shall seek permission from their immediate supervisor to serve on the staff senate.
- (2) The number of senators shall be proportional to the number of total staff, both exempt and non-exempt, per each administrative unit. One (1) senator per 75 staff employees (or portion thereof) for both exempt and non-exempt employees.
- (3) Staff count of the administrative units shall be reviewed annually in the first quarter of the calendar year to guarantee each unit is represented by the correct number of senators.
- (4) Human Resources shall supply the list of employees within each administrative unit annually or upon request.
- (5) Should the number of seats allocated to a unit for the next term decrease below the current number of senators for that unit and no senator is up for re-election, no senator will be required to step down during that term.
- (6) The following employee positions are excluded from serving as a staff senator:
  - Chancellor
  - Vice Chancellor
  - Associate Vice Chancellor/Assistant Vice Chancellor
  - Dean/Associate Dean/Assistant Dean
  - Teaching Fellow/Teaching Assistant/ Graduate Student
  - Individuals in positions classified as student positions
  - Faculty/lecturers/professional librarians/ adjunct professors/special appointed faculty/instructors
  - Non-UT Health Science Center employees

### **Senator, Officer, and Committee Responsibilities:**

Senators will:

1. Serve for three (3) years.
2. Make informed decisions.
3. Vote on matters brought before the Staff Senate.
4. Serve on at least one (1) standing committee during your term.
5. Serve on university committees when requested or appointed. No senator, aside from the president or president-elect, is permitted to serve on more than one university committee, explicitly as a representative of the Staff Senate, at a time, unless no other senator can fill that vacancy.

Staff Senate Officers shall:

- Serve for one (1) year. The President-elect automatically assumes the President position in the following year and the President automatically assumes the Past-President position at the same time.
- All Officer positions are available to new incoming senators, except for the President, Past-President, and President-elect
- President-elect requires at least one (1) prior year of service on the senate.
- Officers may serve two (2) consecutive terms by election of the voting membership.

The President shall:

- Preside at all regular and special meetings.
- Vote only in the event of a tie.
- Enforce all regulations and policies.
- Preside over the Executive Committee.
- Oversee all standing committees.
- Prepare the organizational chart of the staff senate.
- Set and approve agendas.
- Represent the Staff Senate at all functions which require representation of the Staff Senate or appoint a designee.
- Call special meetings.
- Communicate Staff Senate operations to the Chancellor or Chancellor's designee(s).
- Approve all financial transactions and authorize the disbursement of funds in collaboration with the account holder assigned by the Chancellor or the Chancellor's designee(s).
- Establish ad hoc committees as approved by the Staff Senate.
- Meet with the Chancellor at least once per academic year, inviting all or part of the Executive Committee or another designee, as needed.
- Will automatically assume the role of Past-President at the end of the one-year term.
- Perform other such duties as associated with this office.

The President-elect shall:

- Prepare to fulfill the role of President in the following year.
- Preside over meetings in the absence of the President.
- Assist President in performing leadership responsibilities.
- Fulfill any term vacated by the President.
- Maintain fiscal reports and monitor the budget in accordance with the President.
- Develop annual report and other reports, as requested, with the Membership and Assessment Coordinator.
- Perform other such duties as associated with this office or deemed appropriate by the President.

The Past-President shall:

- Serve in an advisory capacity to the Executive Committee.
- Ensure continuity of multi-year projects, as assigned by the Executive Committee.
- Serve as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee.

The Parliamentarian shall:

- Oversee the execution of Staff Senate business to ensure adherence to the bylaws and procedures.
- Advise the President on parliamentary procedures in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, as applied in any amendments or other calls to vote.
- Make approved edits to the official bylaws and procedures based on new motions or legislation. Provide changes to the Communications Coordinator for website updates.
- Take minutes and attendance at meetings in the absence of the Secretary.
- Perform other such duties as associated with this office or deemed appropriate by the President.

The Secretary shall:

- Record attendance.
- Call for agenda items, prepare draft agendas and take minutes of all Staff Senate and Executive Committee meetings.
- Email the agenda and minutes to each Executive Committee members within ten (10) days prior to next meeting.
- Email agendas and minutes to the full Staff Senate prior to a meeting, ensuring both are posted to the Staff Senate website.
- Maintain all records of the Staff Senate including list of Senators, committees, and University committees.
- Perform other such duties as associated with this office or deemed appropriate by the President.

The Communications Coordinator shall:

- Create, edit, and maintain all content on the Staff Senate website, publicize meeting notice to the campus.
- Edit and maintain the communication plan set forth by the Staff Senate Executive Committee.
- Perform other such duties as associated with this office or deemed appropriate by the President.

The Membership and Assessment Coordinator shall:

- Review results of major university or administrative unit assessments and report to Staff Senate to ensure knowledge of results.
- Oversee implantation committee assembly.
- Oversee implementation of ad-hoc internal assessments each year, with specific topics and copy to be determined by the Executive Committee.
- Review ad-hoc internal assessment results with the Executive Committee and Staff Senate.
- Work with President-elect on annual report or other reports, as requested by the Chancellor of the University.
- Facilitate term elections of the Staff Senate.
- Perform other such duties as associated with this office or deemed appropriate by the President.

The Employee Engagement Coordinator shall:

- Coordinate volunteer opportunities for Staff Senate.
- Oversee volunteers from Staff Senate for campus events.
- Develop Staff Senate recognitions
- Coordinate appointments to campus award committees.

The Employee Relations Advisory Board Representatives shall:

- Serve in an advisory role to the UT President with respect to human resources policies, programs, and practices
- One exempt and one non-exempt senator will be elected during the annual officer elections.

The Human Resources Representative shall:

- Serve in an advisory capacity to the Executive Committee.
- Serve as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee.
- Provide list of employees, for election purposes, within each administrative unit.

## Terms of Office and Vacancies:

### Terms of Office:

- Senators shall serve a three-year term.
  - Each senator may serve two (2) full 3-year consecutive terms. Senators filling an incomplete term do not count that service towards their six (6) year limit prior to a mandatory roll-off period of at least one term.
- At the completion of the senator's second complete term, the senator shall be required to take a one term absence from the Senate before becoming eligible to seek re-election (referred to as the roll-off period).
- The Staff Senate term begins the first day of the calendar year.

### Vacancy within the Staff Senate:

- A vacancy due to termination of employment or removal from the Staff Senate shall be filled within 45 days of Staff Senate notification or final date serving as a senator, whichever comes second.
- The Membership and Assessment Committee will research the prior election results and nominations within the impacted administrative unit.
  - Within the administrative unit where the position is vacant, the nominee that received the most votes, but did not attain a senator position (the runner-up), will be offered the role.
  - If the runner-up declines the position, the next in line with the most votes within the unit will be offered the position.
- In the case where there are no available nominees from the prior election to fill the vacancy, the Membership and Assessment Committee will develop a special election to fill the vacancy.
  - In the case where there are no available nominees to fill the vacancy after a new call for nominations, the Membership and Assessment Committee may work with the President to appoint another eligible staff member to fill the role until the next general election.
  - If the role cannot reasonably be filled within 60 days, the President can approve a prolonged vacancy until the next general election.

### Vacancy Due to Administrative Unit Changes:

- If a senator changes roles that require a transition into a different administrative unit, the senator will complete their term as a representative of the original unit.
- When the term ends, a senator may seek re-election from the new campus unit where the senator is currently/newly employed provided the senator has not served the maximum number of years without a break.
- If there is currently a vacancy in the senator's new unit, the President may appoint the senator to fill that vacancy for the rest of their term and instead instruct the Membership and Assessment Committee to pursue filling the vacancy in the senator's old former unit, provided the Committee has not yet issued a call for nominations or a special election has failed to fill that vacancy.

#### Vacancy within the Executive Committee:

- If the President vacates their term for any reason, the President-elect assumes the role effective immediately.
- All other officer roles may be filled through a call for nominations from the Membership and Assessment Committee at the next Staff Senate meeting.
  - If only one nominee is available, the President may appoint them to fill the role for the remainder of the term.
  - If more than one nominee is available, an election shall be held at that meeting with results reviewed, verified, and announced by the Membership and Assessment Committee at the meeting unless a delay is necessary for proper evaluation.
  - If no nominees are available, the President may designate a future Staff Senate meeting at which another call for nominations will be made.
  - If no replacement can be found after two calls for nominations, the President may approve that vacancy through the end of the term. However, there is no limit to the number of times a call for nominations may be issued by the Membership and Assessment Committee.

#### Elections:

- Nominations for Staff Senators
  - All nominations for the Staff Senate, including the Executive Committee, shall be coordinated by the Membership and Assessment Committee, and overseen by the Parliamentarian.
  - Nominees' information will be emailed to the appropriate administrative units for voting based on a calendar set by the Membership and Assessment Committee during an election year.
  - The nomination period, election period, and date on which election results are announced should be communicated to affected administrative units ahead of time via email and the Staff Senate website.
- Voting for Staff Senators
  - All elections shall be conducted by ballot.
  - The nominees shall be listed as candidates.
  - Each candidate listing must at least include the following: length of time at UT Health Science Center, role and office, disclosure of past service on the Staff Senate, if any.
  - Candidates will be given the opportunity to include additional information about themselves to appear on the ballot.
  - Candidates shall only be viewed by the employees from the administrative unit in which the nominee is housed.
  - Specific instructions shall be placed on each ballot for voting assistance.
  - Voters may cast one vote for each open seat in their administrative unit. (For example, in an administrative unit with five open seats, voters can vote for as few as one or as many as five candidates).
  - Ballots shall be counted under the supervision of the Membership and Assessment Committee.
  - Election results for senators shall be communicated to all staff at least two weeks



- prior to the beginning of the new term.
- Election results and ballots shall be retained until the next election is concluded.
  - Election results may be contested for up to 30 days following the announcement of the election results. Requests for a recount shall be submitted to and overseen by the Parliamentarian.
  - In the case of a tie vote among two or more candidates, a runoff election shall be held. All tied candidates shall be listed on the runoff ballot.
    - In the runoff election, the candidate receiving the most votes shall be declared the winner.
    - In case of a tie vote in the runoff, the winner shall be randomly selected by the Membership and Assessment Committee.
- Officer Elections
    - Officer elections are to be coordinated by the Membership and Assessment Committee to take place during the final Staff Senate meeting of the calendar year.
      - Nominations for an officer position can also be emailed to the President prior to the final meeting of the term, at which the election will take place.
    - At the final meeting of the term, nominations will be taken from any senator in attendance, including newly elected senators who have not yet commenced their term.
    - Having given prior consent, nominees need not be present to be considered for an officer position.
    - Officers will take office on the first day of the new year.
    - All present senators, current and incoming, are qualified to vote in an officer election.
    - Voting is conducted by ballot and counted by the Membership and Assessment Committee.
    - A simple majority of votes shall determine the elected officers.

Staff Senate Committees:

- The Executive Committee shall:
  - Reserve the right to consider all matters brought before the Staff Senate and may take official action on matters that do not require the Staff Senate's vote or consent.
  - Exercise general oversight of the Staff Senate and its committees and may refer to committees when necessary.
- The Membership and Assessment Committee shall:
  - Research and present bylaw changes, as needed.
  - Recruit new Senators preceding each General Election and Special Election.
  - Oversee all elections, including managing the Staff Senate Officer elections, under the supervision of the Parliamentarian.
  - Review and report on general university assessment, as necessary.
  - Conduct assessments as needed, under the supervision of the Assessment Coordinator.
- The Communications and Public Relations Committee shall:
  - Exercise responsibility for the Staff Senate website.
  - Exercise responsibility for major notifications and communications.

- The Employee Engagement Committee shall:
  - Coordinate volunteer opportunities for the Staff Senate
  - Represent the Staff Senate on campus award committees
  - Develop Staff Senate recognition awards
  - Assist with campus events for employees (ex. Employee Appreciation Day, Administrative Professionals Day)
  
- Ad Hoc and University Committees:
  - Staff Senators shall be represented on university committees that affect UT Health Science Center staff.
  - Ad hoc committees may be established to review a specific issue at any regular meeting of the Staff Senate upon a simple majority vote of the members present.

## **SECTION IV – STAFF SENATE EXPECTATIONS**

### **Meetings**

- Regular meetings of the Staff Senate shall be held every month, with the exception of campus closures.
- Special meetings of the Staff Senate may be called by a majority of the senators, Executive Committee or the President.
- The meeting agenda will:
  - Include time and location of the upcoming Staff Senate meeting.
  - Include the order of business and supporting documentation.

### **Attendance**

- Excessive absences (defined as three or more in a single year) of any type may subject a senator to removal.
- Attendance is required at both the Staff Senate monthly meeting, as well as committee meetings.
- Senators found to regularly skip significant portions of a meeting are subject to the same review process as outlined below.
- Senators shall be responsible for attending monthly meetings as well as special or called meetings except for the following reasons, which will constitute excused absence:
  - Annual leave
  - Sick leave
  - Official University business other than normal job duties that require the Senator's attendance at the time of the regularly scheduled Senate meeting.
- In the cases of annual leave and official business, the senator shall provide advance notice to the Secretary and President. In the case of sick leave, the senator shall notify the Secretary and President upon the first day of returning to work.
- After a senator has two absences, the Secretary shall contact the senator for an explanation for missed meetings. An opportunity to resign from the Senate will be given if the senator feels they will not be able to comply with the attendance policy.
- A senator who has three absences during a 12-month period of the three-year term shall be

reviewed for removal.

- The review process consists of the creation of an Ad Hoc committee made up of three Staff Senators to review the circumstances and make a recommendation to the Executive Committee.
- This Ad Hoc committee does not have to be approved with a simple majority, nor does it have to be convened at the next Staff Senate. The Executive Committee can assemble this committee outside the scope of a Staff Senate meeting.
- The review process is as follows:
  - Minutes shall be taken at all meetings pertaining to the review process.
  - The Ad Hoc committee can allow the senator up to an additional three absences as part of their recommendation.
  - The recommendation will be sent to the Executive Committee no later than three days after the Ad Hoc committee meeting.
  - The Executive Committee shall contact the senator in good faith at least three working days prior to the Staff Senate meeting at which their removal will be read into the minutes.
  - Removal from the Staff Senate does not preclude an individual from seeking nomination or participating in future Staff Senate elections.

### **Quorum**

- The Staff Senate shall not transact official business without the presence of a quorum.
- A quorum shall exist when a simple majority of the voting senators present (fifty percent plus one).
- When the presence of a quorum is challenged by a member of the Staff Senate, the Secretary shall conduct a roll call and announce to the President the presence of a quorum.
- In the absence of a quorum:
  - The President may only make informational announcements.
  - Any business transactions that require a vote will be tabled until a quorum is present.
  - Invited guests may address the Staff Senate or request to return at the next meeting.