



UT Tyler **STAFF SENATE**

Staff Senate Monthly Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2025 | 3:00 p.m. | COB 307

Meeting not recorded due to local Zoom outage

❖ **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

➤ **Star Award**

- February Star Award recipient is Sharon Amaral Back.
- March recipient will be announced at the next monthly meeting.
- Nominations for April will be open until the 25th. If you would like to nominate someone, please do so at https://uttyler.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ey74ctmUZIGEyMu

➤ **Faculty and Staff Awards Banquet**

- Luncheon, Friday, April 18th.

➤ **Benefits**

▪ **Benefits Fair Update**

- The Office of Human Resources is working to host an additional opportunity for staff and faculty to engage with our benefit providers. Since we have our Annual Open Enrollment each July, they're working to host an event each February, called "Swoop into Wellness". The date is yet to be confirmed, but they are working towards hosting it the first week of February 2026 at the UT Tyler academic campus. Vendors will include dental, vision, health care representatives, as well as EAP, MD Live and other benefit providers.
- If you have specific questions about your benefits, please email us at benefits@uttyler.edu. Alexandra Garcia and her team are always available to assist.

▪ **UT Living Well Spring Forward Challenge from April 1-May 4**

- Visit <https://ut.limeade.com> and use single sign on to log in.
- The challenge: In your team of **3-5 people**, log at least **1 million** combined total steps over the 5-week challenge. The team challenge begins on

Tuesday, April 1 and ends Sunday, May 4. *The last day to track activity is Wednesday, May 7.* Track your preferred activity by manually logging steps, syncing your fitness device, or using the steps conversion calculator tool.

- Teams who reach the 1 million steps will be entered into a drawing for a prize.
- UT Living Well Platform powered by Limeade available to **UT SELECT and UT CARE** members (employees, retirees, and dependents) ages 18+; it also has webinars, videos, wellness assessments, etc.
- **2025 UT Quarterly Financial Wellness Education – hosted by Human Resources**
 - April 16, 2025, 11:00 am- 12:00pm – "Achieving Financial Wellness" – Click here to [Register](#)
 - May 8, 2025, 11:00 am- 12:00pm – "Making Your Cash Work Harder" – Click here to [Register](#)
 - June 4th, 2025 11:00 am- 12:00pm – "Social Security, TRS and Your Retirement" – Click here to [Register](#)
 - Unfortunately, they cannot record the workshops but, you can visit [UT System's Retirement Vendor webpage](#) to access contact information and explore the full range of services offered by each vendor.
- **Employee Scholarship Program**
 - Employee Scholarship Applications are now being accepted for Summer 2025! You can find the scholarship application, guidelines, and eligibility requirements for each available scholarship at <https://www.utt Tyler.edu/human-resources/employees/employee-scholarship-program.php>.
 - Deadline to submit employee / spouse / dependent application(s): May 1, 2025
- **"Did you know?"**
 - The travel office shared a new promotion with Southwest Airlines that runs from April 8 - May 5.
 - **Promotion Details:** New Rapid Rewards Members will earn **750 bonus Rapid Rewards points** just for enrolling—plus **4,250 more Rapid Rewards points** when they fly a round trip (or two one-ways) within **60 days of enrollment**. No promotion registration needed; creating a Rapid Rewards account during the promotion period automatically opts the traveler in to receive points.
 - **Enroll in Rapid Rewards here:** Southwest.com/enroll

Earn up to

5000

bonus points

when you enroll in Rapid Rewards® and give us a fly.*

Learn more at
Southwest.com/NewMemberAcquisition

*Terms apply. All Rapid Rewards® rules and regulations apply and can be found at Southwest.com/rterms.

Here's how:

PTS

Enroll now and earn **750 bonus points.**

PTS

Then, book and fly one round trip (or two one-way flights) within 60 days and **earn 4,250 bonus points.**

Southwest 

Business

➤ Leadership

- University Appreciation Updates – Event Changes
 - All off-campus activities that have been traditionally a part of University Appreciation have been cancelled
 - On-campus events and the appreciation luncheon will continue as planned.
 - While many of you have already received communication on this, more details will come from a representative in your district.
 - From here, Staff Senate will be looking at planning an additional event sometime this summer to continue the spirit of this event with campus policies and business concerns in mind
 - Request from Staff Senate to submit suggestions for ideas that include guest speakers, themes, or activities that enhance employee appreciation. Input will help guide re-strategizing efforts for future planning.
 - More details to be provided by Daniel Deslatte, Chief Business Officer

❖ GUEST SPEAKERS

➤ Daniel Deslatte, Chief Business Officer

- Acknowledged recent concerns regarding sudden changes in University Appreciation events.
- As the Chief Business Officer, this role is the specific officer named in the policy as responsible for ensuring the institution complies with UT Tyler policy, UT System rules, and state law on the matter.

- Confirmed that past off-campus appreciation events are not permissible under Texas law and have never been allowable under the Texas Constitution since 1876.
 - In Texas, the principle that public resources cannot be used for private purposes is established in the Texas Constitution (see Art. III, Sec. 51 and 52; Art. XVI, Section 6), various sections of state statute (see Texas Govt. Code, Sec. 2203.004), the biennial General Appropriations Act, and numerous Texas Attorney General Opinions dating back decades.
 - UT System Rule 2.1.2, adopted in 2006, provides additional guidance to UT System offices on entertainment expenditures (employee and non-employees).
 - UT Tyler Policy 5.20 (approved in 2001) conforms with UTS 2.1.2 and applies its principles to UT Tyler employees. This policy also includes the \$20 limitation we discussed.
 - Any resource under UT Tyler's control and custody – including both financial and human resources – must be used only for a bone fide state purpose. This includes the time and effort of our employees. Activities such as off-site entertainment events (e.g., bowling, painting, zoo visits, or movies during business hours) are personal entertainment, which is a private purpose and therefore not an allowable use of time or resources, regardless of funding source.
- Employee morale or team-building alone is not a sufficient justification.
- Professional development events with clear agendas are permissible.
 - Examples: speakers, training sessions, and workshops.
 - May include meals or giveaways if aligned with stated business purpose and within cost limits.
- Q: Will unspent funds from this year be lost?
 - No, there is no plan to reduce or reclaim staff senate funding. Concern is only with appropriate use, not availability.
- Q: Will policy enforcement be consistent across campus?
 - Yes. All departments are expected to comply equally. Violations are addressed as they are identified.
- Q: Can events occur off-campus if they have a legitimate agenda?
 - Potentially, yes. For example, conferences or retreats with documented agendas and professional purposes may be allowable.
- Q: Can discounted tickets or weekend activities be sponsored?

- Public funds cannot be used to purchase tickets, but discounted partnerships (e.g., with the Texas Rangers) are fine if outside business hours and employee-paid.
- Q: What about on-campus events with food or giveaways?
 - Allowed when tied to professional development or structured appreciation efforts with defined purposes.
- Staff Senate is encouraged to partner with HR (Gracie) for planning allowable events and appreciation initiatives.
- University leadership is committed to supporting appreciation within the law and ensuring equitable guidance across departments.

➤ **Campus Announcements**

- Denim Day: Saturday, April 26 | 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM | Patriot Plaza
 - (An event to raise awareness of domestic violence)
- If you would like to be a mentor or support the First Generation Program, please reach out to Academic Success at success@uttyler.edu. More information about supporting UT Tyler first generation students can be found at <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/first-generation-program.php>.

Next meeting will be Wednesday, May 21 at 3:00 pm, COB 307 or via Zoom