



# UT Tyler **STAFF SENATE**

## Staff Senate Monthly Meeting Minutes

June 18, 2025 | 3:00 p.m. | COB 307

[Zoom Link](#) | Passcode: mXS3d0\*%

### ❖ COMMITTEE UPDATES

#### ➤ University Appreciation

##### ▪ Main Event:

- A formal, plated **University Appreciation Luncheon** will be held **July 22**. It is open to both staff and faculty and will include **presentation of service awards**.
- **Wellness & Reflection Days:** Scheduled during the Open Enrollment Fairs on July 15 (Main Campus) and July 16 (Health Science Center).
- More information will be made available via Patriots Engage and Campus News Bulletin

#### ➤ Policies and Procedures

- Updates to the Policies and Procedures. Changes include:
  - Merging historically unrepresented or vacant districts with active ones to improve engagement.
  - Pairing health-related colleges together and non-health colleges together for alignment.
  - The Senate approved the new structure, which will go into effect **September 1, 2025**.

#### ➤ Nomination and Elections

- Nominations emails is planning to be sent to districts on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Last day to nominate for open senator position will be July 9<sup>th</sup>.

#### ➤ Benefits

- “Did you know?” -
  - ◆ **Mandatory Compliance Training** Annual training are due Monday, June 30. To complete your trainings, you’ll log into the Site: <https://uttyler.percipio.com/>. Under My Assignments, Click Launch Compliance Training. Then select the relevant course(s) to launch the training. If you have any questions, please reach out to Human Resources at [humanresources@uttyler.edu](mailto:humanresources@uttyler.edu).

- ◆ **2025 Annual TB Surveillance Program – Open until June 30 for HSC Employees** The TB Surveillance Program for Health Science Center employees is still open until June 30. All employees will need to complete a brief survey. The survey takes just a couple of minutes to complete and is a requirement for HSC employees. Click on this form: [TB Surveillance Form](#). Please reach out to the North Campus Occupational Health team at [occhealth@uthct.edu](mailto:occhealth@uthct.edu) with any questions or concerns you may have.
- ◆ **Annual Enrollment for Benefits** is from July 15-31. Changes submitted will take effect September 1, 2025. Human Resources will be hosting their annual enrollment event on July 15 for the UT Tyler campus and July 16 for HSC. More information will be sent out via campus email within the next two weeks. If you have specific questions about your benefit eligibility, please email [benefits@uttyler.edu](mailto:benefits@uttyler.edu).

➤ **Star Award**

- March recipient - Sara Renney, Administrative Assistant for Electrical Engineering
- April recipient - Nathan Finley, Financial Aid and Scholarship Officer
- May recipient will be announced soon.
- Nominations for June will be open until the 25<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to nominate someone, please do so at:  
[https://uttyler.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_ey74ctmUZIGEyMu](https://uttyler.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ey74ctmUZIGEyMu)

❖ **GUEST SPEAKERS - Courtney Smith, Associate Vice President of Government Relations**

➤ **Texas Legislative Session Overview**

- Session Timeline: Convened: January 14, Adjourned: June 2
  - Texas Legislature meets biennially for 140 days.
- Texas Senate Composition: 31 members: 11 Democrats, 20 Republicans
  - Presided over by the Lieutenant Governor (non-voting), who also appoints all committee members.
  - 16 standing committees.
- Texas House of Representatives: 150 members: 62 Democrats, 88 Republicans
  - Speaker of the House elected by members: Dustin Burrows (West Texas/Lubbock)
  - Major rules overhaul: Created 30 standing committees and 12 permanent subcommittees.
  - No Democratic committee chairs for the first time in modern history.

➤ **Legislative Outcomes**

- Bill Volume: Nearly 8,700 bills filed; approximately 14% passed (86% failure rate).
  - Legislative system is intentionally structured to be selective and rigorous.
- State Budget: Constitutionally required to pass a balanced budget.

- Budget covers: September 1, 2025 – August 31, 2027.
- Major allocations: \$1 billion for school choice. \$33 billion to higher education institutions. \$82 billion for Medicaid (anticipated enrollment increase).
- A surplus existed at the start of the session; not all forecasted funds were spent.

#### ➤ **Higher Education Legislation**

- Senate Bill 37 – Higher Ed Governance Reform: Alters faculty senate operations.
  - Reforms core curriculum review processes.
  - Establishes an Office of the Ombudsman (Governor-appointed, Senate-confirmed). Investigates complaints related to DEI (as restricted by SB 17), tenure, and faculty governance. Has authority to recommend withholding institutional funding for noncompliance.
- Remote Work Legislation: Two separate bills: One specific to institutions of higher education – highly prescriptive. One general for all state agencies – broader language.
  - Both still subject to potential veto by the Governor (veto deadline: June 22).
- Other Legislative Highlights:
  - Free Speech on Campus: Legislation passed.
  - Cybersecurity Measures: Significant activity around securing state systems; cyber command moved under DIR.
  - Research Security Bills: Focused on foreign threats and federal grant oversight.
  - DPRIT Act (Dementia Prevention Research): Modeled after Cancer Prevention Research Institute. \$3 billion investment pending voter approval on November 4, 2025. If passed, could bring significant funding to health campuses.

#### ➤ **Federal Update**

- Department of Education: Conflicting signals: simultaneous efforts to dismantle and increase its responsibilities. Institutions are grappling with uncertainty and poor communication on mandates. Specific concerns raised about RSI (Regular and Substantive Interaction) and accessibility guidelines in online learning.
- Federal Grants: Litigation ongoing regarding indirect cost rate caps. Injunction obtained against the Department of Defense's proposed 15% rate cap.
  - UT System institutions are actively represented through associations filing suit.

#### ➤ **Institutional Implications**

- Faculty Senate vs. Staff Senate:
  - SB 37 impacts Faculty Senate only. Staff Senates are currently not affected.
  - Faculty Senate will undergo changes in structure, presidency, and senator appointments. Some existing practices already align with new legislative requirements.
- Program Evaluation:

- Legislation requires review of low-performing programs and alignment with workforce needs.
- Emphasis on value and return on investment for students.

## ❖ **CAMPUS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **Campus Map Feedback** (Laura Waits, AVP Marketing & Communications):
  - New interactive campus map launched.
  - Request for feedback on missing or misclassified locations.
  - Features include wayfinding and accessibility toggles.
  - Submit feedback via form on the map's homepage.
- **Cowen Center**
  - New season and brand unveiled.
  - Branding completed in-house by Marketing.

*Next meeting will be Wednesday, July 16 at 3:00 pm, COB 307 or via Zoom*