

LSU | Staff Senate

MEETING MINUTES

March 19, 2025

President Olivia Phelps presided over the March 19, 2025; Staff Senate meeting held in the Event Room on the Second Floor of the Barnes & Noble Bookstore at LSU at 10:30 a.m.

Unclassified

Executive/Administrative/Managerial

P - Tammy Millican ('27)

Professional/Non-Faculty

P - Blanchard, Debbie ('27)

P - Bonner, Amber ('26)

A - Bonnette, Michael ('27)

P - Breaux, Kevin ('25)

P - Carney, Mo ('27)

Pr - Cristina, Jennifer ('26)

P - Drake, Dalmer ('26)

A - Duplechain, Joshua ('25)

P - Faulkner, Carli ('27)

A - Franks, Stephenie ('25)

P - Gresham, Deanna ('27)

A - Guttner, Ginger ('25)

P - Kennison, Jennifer ('25)

P - Louviere, Willie ('27)

P - Martin-Whitaker, Neely ('25)

P - McDonald, Quinneke ('27)

P - Miller, Cassaundra ('25)

P - Mimms, Anissa ('26)

P - Muller, Casey ('26)

P - Oster, Anthony ('24)

P - Owens, Jace ('26)

P - Phelps, Olivia ('26)

P - Popov, Jennifer ('26)

P - Simpson, Katilyn ('25)

P - Smith, Henri ('27)

P - Waters, Bradley ('26)

P - White, Dayton ('25)

P - Whittington, Paige ('26)

P - Williams, Amberlon ('25)

A - Wilson, Derek ('27)

Classified

Skilled Crafts

P - Constance, Taylor ('25)

Technical/Paraprofessional

A - Matkovic, Igor ('26)

Clerical/Secretarial

P - Butler, Whitney ('25)

Pr - Jensen, Jerri ('26)

P - Probst, Steven ('27)

P - Smith, Celeste ('26)

Service/Maintenance

A - Robertson, Winkeyssa ('27)

P - Indicates Present

Pr - Indicates Proxy

A - Indicates Absent

A/P - indicates Absence not Counted

GUESTS:

Laquita White, Residential Life
Joshua Shelton, College of Coast & Environment
Dana Sanders, College of Coast & Environment
Sarah Langheld, Residential Life
Vickie Madison, University College
Robbie Leumas, Construction Management
Nicholas Kelly, Engineering Technology Services
Haley Nassif, Continuing Education
Clay Benton, Human Resource Management
Sheantel Baker, Human Resource Management
Zacki Soliman, Campus Federal Credit Union
Roxane Berthelot, Campus Federal Credit Union
Casey Coughlin, Campus Federal Credit Union

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Olivia Phelps at 10:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

There was a quorum with two proxies noted.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Celeste Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – February 19, 2025, Staff Senate Meeting

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Member-at-Large Tammy Millican. The motion, seconded by Senator Deanna Gresham, carried.

GUEST SPEAKER – SHEANTEL BAKER & CLAY BENTON, HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

President Olivia Phelps introduced Sheantel Baker, Director of Benefits and Retirement and Clay Benton, Associate Vice President & Chief Human Resource Officer with LSU Human Resource Management.

Sheantel Baker thanked the Staff Senate for the opportunity to speak today about the Social Security Fairness Act and House Resolution No. 169 (HR 169) with regards to the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) Study.

The Social Security Fairness Act was signed into law on January 5, 2025, which ends the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), and Government Pension Offset (GPO). These provisions reduced or eliminated the Social Security benefits of over 3.2 million people who receive a pension based on work

that was not covered by Social Security (a “non-covered pension”) because they did not pay Social Security taxes. This law increases Social Security benefits for certain types of workers, including:

- teachers, firefighters, and police officers in many states
- federal employees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System; and
- people whose work had been covered by a foreign social security system

The WEP was a provision in United States law that changed how Social Security benefits were calculated for individuals who received pensions from jobs that didn't require them to pay Social Security taxes, but also had earnings from jobs where they did contribute to Social Security. The WEP was created to address concerns about "double-dipping," where individuals received both a pension from a non-covered job and Social Security benefits. If someone had a pension from a job that wasn't covered by Social Security, their Social Security retirement or disability benefits could be reduced. The WEP could reduce Social Security benefits, potentially leading to a smaller monthly check or even no check at all. The Social Security Fairness Act repealed the WEP and the GPO, meaning Social Security benefits payable after December 2023 will no longer be impacted by these rules. A modified formula was being used to compute your social security benefit.

The GPO was a Social Security provision that reduced spousal or survivor benefits for individuals who received a pension from government employment that wasn't covered by Social Security by two-thirds of the monthly non-covered pension amount. The Social Security Fairness Act repealed the GPO, meaning that individuals with government pensions based on non-covered work will no longer have their Social Security spousal or survivor benefits reduced. The GPO affected individuals who received a pension from a federal, state, or local government based on work for which Social Security taxes were not paid and were eligible for Social Security benefits as a spouse or survivor. The repeal of the GPO means that individuals who receive both a government pension and Social Security benefits as a spouse or survivor will now receive the full amount of their Social Security benefits, without any reduction due to their government pension.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) shared its significant progress to quickly implement the Social Security Fairness Act. Through March 4, 2025, SSA has already paid over 1 million people more than \$7.5 billion in retroactive payments. Individuals whose benefits were reduced by these provisions will receive retroactive payments covering the period back to January 2024. The average retroactive payment so far is \$6,710.

HR 169 of the 2024 Regular Legislative Session created the Teacher’s Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL) and Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) Task Force. Under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents, the Task Force was charged to study the unclassified staff and faculty recruitment and retention crisis faced by Louisiana’s public postsecondary education institutions as it relates to retirement options provided by the state. Understanding the recruitment and retention issues faced by postsecondary education institutions is critical to continue and build talent development within Louisiana. Higher education is an economic development engine, training the workforce, driving research, and nurturing innovation. As a result of this, the market for faculty and highly skilled staff is both national and international. It is imperative that institutions remain competitive with other states as well as private industry in attracting the best, most productive faculty and staff to educate and develop Louisiana’s future talent base.

Some of the Task Force recommendations are:

- Provide ORP eligibility to certain employees within the Louisiana Community and Technical College System
- Increase the Irrevocable decision timeframe, currently five years (Act 109 of the 2024 Regular Session), to seven years, to align with tenure decisions
- ORP Representation:
 - Creation of a nine-member advisory committee of ORP members to the TRSL board OR
 - Add an elected ORP member to the TRSL board
- Increase minimum employer contributions to 8%
 - Any proceeds from payments to TRSL's UAL remain in Higher Ed and a portion increases employer contributions to ORP
- Request a legislative study of Phased Retirement Program
- Revise TRSL membership eligibility for new hires to make joining TRSL optional under certain conditions. Employees who elect not to participate in TRSL would contribute to Social Security

For the 2025 Regular Legislative Session, some of the pre-filed bills related to retirement are:

- House Bill 24- Representative Bacala
 - Includes the ORP task force recommendations
- Other Pre-filed Bills of Interest:
 - HB 9-Eligibility for retirement under LASERS
 - HB 10-Reemployment of retirees under certain circumstances in LASERS
 - HB 20-Reemployment of retired teachers in TRSL

The floor was opened for questions.

President Phelps thanked Sheantel Baker and Clay Benton for attending today's meeting.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Olivia Phelps reviewed relevant meetings in which she attended.

Phelps attended the Council of Staff Advisors meeting on February 20, 2025.

Phelps attended the Board of Supervisors meeting on February 21, 2025.

Phelps presented on Staff Senate activities at the LSU Law School's Staff meeting on February 26, 2025.

The Staff Senate Executive Committee met with Provost Haggerty on February 28, to discuss directives from the Office of Communication and University Relations that stemmed from the Board of Supervisor's Resolution. There was discussion regarding subsequent communication with the caucuses and concerned staff members regarding diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. LSU's institutional resources will no longer be able to support those initiatives. There is no update on the request for tuition exemption for dependents.

Phelps attended the Board of Regents Safety meeting on February 28, regarding the survey for all schools in Louisiana on safety. Some of the items included provided information on evacuation and emergency operations for individual buildings, cameras, positive impact, and the need for scooter safety and storage because they can be unsafe.

Phelps attended the Academic Freedom Forum with Faculty Senate on March 13. The speech was recorded. Phelps will share the link if you would like to listen to that discussion.

President Phelps announced that Staff Appreciation Week has been rescheduled to week of April 21-27. The LSU Staff Senate will be hosting a Jambalaya sale (Thank You to Campus Federal Credit Union) on April 2, to raise funds to help fund the events that are being planned during that week. We need to sell all 250 plates which can be picked up during lunchtime. Senate volunteers will be needed to help during these events. A sign-up link will be circulated for participation.

In response to that meeting, Phelps attended a meeting with the Foundation to discuss a fundraising website for the Staff Senate to be able to promote and receive payments through fundraising efforts.

The resolution in support of amending the Staff Senate Scholarship agreement to include an awarding process is being drafted and will be presented during the next general meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Senator Appointment

The Staff Senate Executive Committee has approved the following appointment.

Dr. Haley Nassif, who works with LSU Online & Continuing Education has expressed an interest in getting involved on the Staff Senate. She has been employed at LSU since 2022. Haley is filling a vacancy in the Professional/Non-Faculty (Unclassified) Category through 2026.

OLD BUSINESS

General Election Timeline (Amended)

Staff Senate General Elections – 2025

February 25, 2025 - Staff Employee Lists requested from HRM.

March 12, 2025 - Call for Nomination (Candidacy Form on the website)

March 26, 2025 - Deadline for nomination forms to be returned to the Staff Senate office.

April 2, 2025 - Deadline for nominees to withdraw.

April 7, 2025 - Ballots distributed to Staff (per Category)

April 18, 2025 - Deadline to return ballots to the Staff Senate office.

April 21, 2025 - Tabulate results; notify winners.

President Phelps announced that the Staff Senate will call for Executive Officer nominations during the April meeting with speeches and election in May. The 2025-26 Executive Committee members will be announced during the June 18, general meeting.

Staff Senate Budget

Treasurer Henri Smith provided a written financial report for March that was included in the meeting packet for Senate review.

LSU Staff Senate Strategic Plan

Member-at-Large Tammy Millican shared a copy of the LSU Staff Senate's Strategic Plan internal document with the full senate for feedback. The Long Range Review and Planning Committee reviewed all of the comments received from the staff survey while drafting this document. This helped with creating goals and objectives internally of how Staff Senate will operate for the next five years. Respondents who expressed an interest in participating in a focus group will be given an update and invited to review the draft when it is completed and offer additional feedback.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

April Meeting

The April 16, General Meeting will be held in the Event Room on the second floor of the Barnes & Noble at LSU Bookstore.

Representatives with the LSU Emergency Operations Center have requested to speak to the full senate regarding hurricane season and discuss their role and process for emergency preparedness.

Staff Appreciation Week

President Phelps announced that Staff Appreciation Week will be held April 21-25.

Below is an outline of events being planned:

- Monday – Tiger Stadium Tours – 3 will be offered
- Tuesday – LSU vs Northwestern with a baseball tailgate
- Wednesday – Deans, Directors, and Department Heads departmental staff appreciation
- Thursday – Crawfish Boil on the Parade Grounds
- Friday – Ice Cream Social at the Dairy Store

Information about Staff Appreciation Week can be found on the Staff Senate Website.

Volunteers are needed and sign-ups have been sent out electronically for participation.

Staff Senator Birthday

Staff Senator March Birthdays:

- Senator Michael Bonnette celebrated his birthday on March 10.
- Senator Katilyn Simpson will celebrate her birthday on March 20.
- Administrative Coordinator Melonie Milton will celebrate her birthday on March 23.

Happy Birthday!

SEC Food Fight is an annual competition between all Southeastern Conference schools to raise food and funds for their campus pantries. Schools earn points based on contributions:

- 1 point for each individually wrapped food item
- 1 point for every \$1 donated

This is LSU's first year competing. Let's show the SEC that LSU knows how to win off the field, too!

MOTION TO ADJOURN – With there being no more business, Treasurer Henri Smith made a motion to adjourn. The motion, seconded by President-Elect Quinneke McDonald, carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Bradley Waters, Secretary

BW/mm