



## **Regular Meeting Minutes**

**May 27, 2026**

**10:00 am**

**Wingo 315**

**Senators Present: 17**

**Senators Absent: 10**

**Ex-Officio: Present**

### **I. Call to Order**

A. Meeting called to order by VP Richardson at 10:06 am.

### **II. Approval of the Minutes from the previous meeting**

A. Minutes from the previous meeting have been approved and are on the website.

### **III. Guest Speakers**

A. None

### **IV. Officer Reports**

A. President, Sherita Kern- BOT Meeting

B. Vice President, Dylan Richardson

1. Committee Preference Form due EOB today.

2. Retreat Reminder

a) Lunch update- 12:30 pm- agenda will be sent this week

C. Treasurer, Shalia Delph

1. Treasurer Updates -No outstanding expenses. All balances are current.

D. Secretary, Teresa Burton - No report

E. Parliamentarian/Historian/Assistant Treasurer, Melanie Straw-Watson

No report

F. Ex Officio, Carlos Herrera -No report

### **V. Senate Committee Reports**

A. Courtesy Committee -No cards

### **VI. University Committee Reports**

None

### **VII. Constituent Concerns/Communication**

A. I received a concern earlier today regarding the TREC's summer hours. According to the staff member, it used to open at 9 am on Saturday's and now it is only open from 12 pm- 4 pm. They enjoy using it and mentioned it being a part of the staff benefits and wanted an explanation for the decrease of hours open.

**Response:** Thank you for reaching out and sharing this concern. The change in T-Rec hours is the result of several factors that we have been working through over the past couple of years. As student enrollment has declined, our department's budget has also been impacted because our operating budget is funded directly through student fees. With fewer students contributing to those fees, our available funding has decreased, and we have experienced budget deficits over the last two years. Based on current enrollment trends, we anticipate continued pressure on the budget in the coming years. Because of that, we worked with University Administration to review our operations and identify areas where adjustments could be made while still maintaining access to the facility. One of the changes we had to consider was reducing facility hours.

In doing so, we looked closely at usage data throughout the year to determine when the facility had the lowest number of users. The hours that were reduced were based on those lower-use times and were part of a broader effort to conserve departmental resources. The new summer hours, as well as the adjusted hours for the fall and spring semesters, were reviewed and decided on by our staff in coordination with the Administration. We understand that any reduction in hours can be frustrating, Especially for those who regularly use and value the facility. However, the decision was made after reviewing usage patterns and considering the financial realities facing the department.

We certainly appreciate that faculty and staff see access to the T-Rec as a valued benefit, and we want to continue providing that access as much as possible. At the same time, we have to balance that goal with the need to operate responsibly within our available budget. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

B. I was reading through the minutes of the last meeting, and I saw that we don't have a COLA in place for this year. No COLA this year is just simply unacceptable in the current economy - US inflation accelerated to 3.8% annually in April. If you care at all about the employees of this University, this should be the absolute highest priority item in any University meetings. Many of our coworkers struggle to put food on the table for their families already, and with the drastic increase in inflation and general cost of living, it's the most important issue in those employees' lives. Personally, I don't think a COLA should apply to those already making enough to live and survive in America. It should be aimed to assist the ones who stand to suffer the most from the K-shaped economy. I hope my opinion is understood.

**Staff Senate Response:** On behalf of Staff Senate, thank you for voicing your concern. It is important to us to always maintain transparency and to advocate for all staff to the best of our ability. Through the compensation committee along with

discussions between the shared governance, it was important to prioritize staff and faculty who were much further from the market value of their position. This doesn't mean there are no further conversations taking place regarding strategies for future COLA's or overall compensation benefits. This topic is and will continue to be important to Staff Senate. We are also grateful for leadership's commitment to the ongoing work and ethic of care it continues to exhibit in regards to the well-being of staff.

**Response:** Thank you for sharing your concerns. We understand the financial pressures many employees and families are facing, and compensation continues to be a major priority for the university.

Over the past five years, the administration has engaged in extensive conversations with Faculty Senate and Staff Senate regarding compensation priorities. Based on those and other internal conversations, the university committed to planning for three years of COLAs from FY24 to FY26, and 2% increases were awarded to all employees in FY24, FY25, and FY26.

As conversations continued beyond that three-year cycle, the feedback from shared governance groups indicated that the highest compensation priority for FY27 was ensuring employees were paid within a competitive range of established market salaries - thus the commitment was made to complete the market and equity study in FY26 and develop a strategy around those goals as quickly as financially possible.

A point of emphasis during this deliberation was that many fewer people would receive additional compensation if the focus was on market salaries, and the shared governing bodies had many conversations about the priorities for the limited pool of funding available for compensation. Following this campus dialogue, the priority for the FY27 budget became market salary adjustments as opposed to COLAs. While the proposed budget cannot accommodate both market salary adjustments and an additional COLA, the university is making a significant investment (details of the \$1.1 million below) in employee salaries through the implementation of the recently completed salary study.

Following the approval of the December 2025 revised budget, those employees with significantly misaligned salaries were moved to at least 85% of their market salary on January 1, 2026. This benefited a total of 83 employees and was a first-step in bringing all employees to a salary considered in a competitive range per the market study. The current budget proposal for FY27 builds on this effort by moving 170 employees to 90% of their market salary. This places employees within a competitive range of identified market compensation per the study results. Overall, these two rounds of market adjustments will have been completed at a cost of \$1,101,741 and done within one year of the study's release.

The proposed FY27 budget also continues to fund faculty promotions, advancement, faculty longevity bonuses, staff career service awards, and position adjustments.

It is also important to note that the university followed through with the plans in FY24, FY25, and FY26 to raise the minimum salary floor for all university employees.

For many staff positions, these adjustments resulted in consecutive years of increases exceeding seven percent. Those moves impacted approximately 215 employees at a total cost of \$1,070,645 over the three-year period.

Pending fall 2026 enrollment outcomes, the administration remains hopeful that a one-time bonus for employees may also be possible. As administration works with Faculty Senate and Staff Senate during upcoming budget planning cycles, COLAs may again become the preferred compensation strategy to help ensure all employees receive some level of base salary increase.

#### **Clarification from Exercise & Sport Science Dept. Chair**

The Athletic Training salaries that were increased were ONLY those of the faculty in the Athletic Training program. Athletic Trainers hired to only provide medical coverage to UCA Athletic teams and whose funds come from athletic budgets were NOT increased. We had faculty in the Exercise and Sport Science department who teach a 4x4 teaching load AND provide medical coverage to athletic teams who were on a 11-12 month contract who were making less than their 9-month peers. This is the group who is seeing an increase that is due to their contract length and responsibilities. Basically, they have the responsibilities of two positions (instruction and medical coverage).

C. Received a complaint from several staff members in Harrin Hall about the Caf not being open for lunch and only having the one food option in the Student Center. Multiple staff members attempted to dine in the Caf this week and were turned away. They said they were told that the Caf was only open to Boys State. These staff members feel that it's unfair for the Caf to be staffed but not only staff members who are here working to eat. Just because students are no longer on campus shouldn't mean that staff have to leave campus to get lunch.

**RESPONSE from Aramark** Thank you for sharing this feedback. I understand the concern and appreciate you bringing it forward. During Boys State, the Cafeteria is dedicated to supporting the program's dining schedule and logistics, which limits our ability to open it for general service. Because of those operational constraints, we do not advertise as open during this camp.

Our regularly scheduled and advertised summer service resumes today when the cafeteria will be open to serve guests as usual.

We'll take this feedback into consideration as we plan for next year to see if there are opportunities to better accommodate staff during this period.

Thank you again for the feedback.

#### **VIII. Old Business -None**

#### **IX. New Business**

##### **A. June senate meetings**

1. Motion to cancel June 10th and 24th regular meetings made by Senator Smith-Todd. Second by Senator Hanshaw. Motion carries. The next regular meeting for FY 2027 will be July 8, 2026.

**X. Good and Welfare**

- A. Senator Erickson-UCA summer camps are happening. Band camps will be in June.
- B. Senator Delph- Operations manual updates are due EOB today.

**XI. Adjournment**

- A. Motioned by: Senator Watson @ 10:22am.
- B. Second: Senator Blew