




A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON

Special Projects

 Presented by
The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
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Approved by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
and sent forward to the President

Prepared by
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Special Projects Committee

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Since 2011, Staff Council committees have filed final reports to the President in the spring of their service year. Each report contained recommendations or suggestions for addressing issues that the Council members received from their constituents. However, new committees are formed every fall, and members change committees or rotate off the council, so there was no continuity in the committee structure, the actions recommended, or the follow-up.

In September 2013, Staff Council formed a Special Projects Committee to gather and review the previous years' suggestions, and create a more streamlined process for seeing these ideas through from one year to the next.

The first task of the committee was to review the final reports from the previous three years, a total of 13 reports. Over the course of the fall semester, members revisited each of the reports, culling out the recommendations from each and researching whether any action had been taken. With the help of Staff Council Chair, Erika Frahm, the committee determined which of the proposed activities were already completed, which were impossible or not within the scope of the Staff Council, and which were still viable or required additional action.

For example, the 2012-13 Staff Education committee recommended that the university pilot test licenses from an online training resource called Lynda.com. This action was taken in the fall of 2013, and UT staff adopted the benefit so quickly that it is already being expanded. Alternatively, the 2011-12 PERKS committee suggested a "voluntary leave-transfer" program, which was not feasible within the university's human resources system, so no further action was needed.

The Special Projects Committee evaluated each suggested action item from the previous reports, and found two important, all-inclusive campus activities that could still be completed. In addition, the Special Projects Committee developed a wiki page to collect and track staff council recommendations – and outcomes -- for future years.

Knowledge Capture and Continuity:

The first task for the Special Projects Committee was finding and reviewing all of the committee reports from the past committees. In order to streamline this for the future, we propose the addition of a page listing Staff Council Committee Reports to the existing Staff Council wiki page, which will link to each of the previous reports for reference. In addition, a page for each year will list the recommendations from each committee, and their status, for easy reference in the future. A preliminary wiki page has been established at <https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/utsc/UTSC+Reports>

The Staff Council Executive Committee would be tasked with updating the page each spring, following the presentations to the President, and continuing to update the wiki as specific tasks are completed throughout the year.

The "Money Matters" presentation:

Compensation & Benefits have been chosen as committee topics twice, in 2011 and 2013, and are clearly front-of-mind topics for staff. The committees recommended addressing salary and merit inequities, and giving staff a Total Compensation package, to improve their understanding of the value of their benefits. The latter has already been implemented. In order to address the former, the Special Projects Committee determined that the best path forward would be to offer a 1-hour webcast presentation, with optional CareerSmart credit for staff pursuing certificates. The presentation will be given by Mary Knight, Associate Vice President, Office of the Vice-

President and Chief Financial Officer. It will outline how the university budget is distributed, how the laws of the state of Texas impact compensation, and how increases or bonuses are derived.

Alternative Transportation

In 2011, the Transportation committee suggested hosting a Transportation Fair to promote alternative methods of reaching campus, with the goal of improving campus access for the entire UT community. The Fair would serve as part of a public relations campaign to promote carpooling, cycling and public transportation, and would include representation from Capital Metro, ZipCar and others. In addition, the committee recommended a "Ride the Train and Bus to Work" day for the entire university community, with the additional goal of seeing high-profile members of the campus participate in order to raise awareness.

Working with the office of Campus Planning and Facilities, the Special Projects Committee proposes that UT hold an "Alternative Transportation to Work" Day, where all faculty, staff and students would be encouraged to use public transportation, ride bicycles, or carpool to work. Materials could be distributed in advance around campus, with bus & rail schedules and suggested routes to/from different areas of campus. Additional information could also be provided on carpooling and Sharepass availability.

This activity would serve to educate the community about the various public transportation options available, and the personal and environmental benefits of each. This would also give staff more information in determining which options might best fit their economic needs.

Benefits to the University:

With the wiki report-tracking tool, the university administration can take action in response to Staff Requests, and receive recognition for their responsiveness. The administration can use the tool to provide an explanation to any Staff Council queries, and the responses will be documented for future reference. The administration also will know whom to contact regarding specific requests and recommendations.

Conclusion

The Special Projects Committee aims to continue our efforts towards the creation of tools that allow for knowledge transfer and continuity. The Special Projects Committee will also continue to address any recommendations from annual reports that are readily actionable by the representatives.