A History of the Staff Senate

In 1997, the North Carolina Central University (NCCU) Professional Office Workers Association (POWA) expressed an interest in developing an organization that would involve all non-faculty employees. Gloria Chambers met with Chancellor Julius Chambers who gave his full support. For over a year POWA members met with delegates from other University of North Carolina (UNC) campuses to discuss such a plan. There were discussions also in seeking the support of the UNC System President Molly Broad for the establishment of a state-wide employee forum to represent the interests of SPA and non-teaching EPA staff. The mission was to address employees’ concerns; serve as liaison between staff members and the Chancellor, the Administrative council, the Board of Trustees, Faculty Senate and the Student Government; promote and facilitate staff participation in the University community; assist in the communication of issues and activities affecting staff members and initiate the review of policies and/or procedures.

The Employee Senate serves at the request of and in an advisory capacity to the Chancellor and his/her designees. It represents SPA and EPA Non-faculty staff, which is designated herein as “University Employees.” The Employee Senate has three primary purposes; they are as follows:

1. To provide a regular, open forum to facilitate communication among all levels of Employees and the University administration concerning general employment interests and concerns, current University operation problems, and University plans or prospects. However, the Employee Senate is not intended to act as a vehicle to deal with individual issues, grievances, or complaints, except as may be decided collectively by the Employee Senate. The Senate is not to be used as a means to circumvent regular administrative channels.

2. To inform the Chancellor and his/her designees on issues requiring the Chancellor’s consideration and advice.

3. To encourage the development of constructive suggestions for more efficient and effective University operations.

James Abdullah served as the first Chair of the Employee Senate:
In 1999 Chancellor Chambers was asked by President Molly Broad to establish an Employee or Staff Senate here at North Carolina Central University. The same request was made to all universities in the University of North Carolina System which had not already established a senate. The objective was to give employees a voice. This voice would include the employees in the business of their employing University. The Employee Senate would allow Employees to assemble for common purposes. Understanding the diversity of each Employee’s occupation while establishing the fact that employees are not adversaries was our goal. The By-Laws and the Constitution were adopted in 1999.

James Osler served as the second Chair of the Employee Senate:
His major initiatives in the year he was chair were to establish the Constitution and By-Laws, to build the delegates’ structure, and to recommend substantive changes to the Chancellor. The changes were recognized and commended by President Molly Broad.

Robin Hanes served as the third Chair of the Employee Senate:
Under her leadership, Ms. Hanes continued to seek improvement and quality of life at North Carolina Central University for its Students, Faculty, and Employees through mutual understanding, recognition of Employee contributions, and respect for the worth of the individual. The current Executive Board has worked diligently to keep the NCCU Employee Senate functioning. The Chancellor was supportive of the Employee Senate. After great consideration the following recommendations have been made in hopes that the NCCU Employee Senate will continue to function and represent all the SPA and Non-Faculty employees on the campus of North Carolina Central University. These are a few recommendations and, as the Senate continues to expand, there will be more.

- A budget to cover expenses, i.e. printing, mailing, travel, etc.
- A fully furnished office.
- Continued support of the Administration here on Campus.
- More visibility to campus community, i.e. Web Page, Newsletter, etc. (these things are in process).
- Participation of the SPA and Non-Faculty employees.

The NCCU Employee Senate has worked to assist staff to enhance skills and abilities through the Center for University Teaching and Learning, as well as through Human Resources. Many different courses are being offered on an ongoing basis, including Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Excel, Introduction to Blackboard and Classroom Presentation Enhancement. Ms. Hanes also chaired several committees such as: the Toy Drive, Employee Appreciation Day and others.
Deborah Torres served as the fourth Chair of the Employee Senate:
Under her leadership, Deborah Torres was responsible for implementation of the Chancellor’s Book Loan Program, which provided the employees opportunities to improve their education. Other accomplishment from 2003-2004 include serving on several committees.

Goals for 2004-2005 include participation in NCCU Faculty and Staff Programs, State Employees’ Campaign, NCCU Toys and Book Drive, Employees’ Appreciation Day/Recognition Awards and hosting the University Staff Senate Chairs’ meeting at NCCU.

Rebie Coleman serves as the fifth Chair of the Staff Senate:
Under Ms. Coleman’s leadership, on September 16, 2007, the Employee Senate’s name was changed to the Staff Senate and was approved by the body in keeping with name used over the UNC System. Coleman has implemented and accomplished some of the goals from the previous chairs, such as support of the Chancellor and Administration, in addition to engaging Staff to attend monthly meetings and key activities on campus; as well as encouraging conformity from supervisors for their employee endeavors in serving the Senate. The Staff Senate Strategic Plan was completed in March of 2008. Ms. Coleman has continued the Chancellor’s Book Loan for Staff.

A new website has been launched for the Staff Senate as well as a newsletter and brochure. The Staff Senate currently operates in Ms. Coleman’s office, 107 Taylor Education Building. Her tireless efforts include a dual role as the Faculty Senate Administrative Support and the developer of an NCCU Staff Senate Scholarship Fund in September 2009. Sue Simpson, a staff member and alumna working in Information Technology, presented a check for $1,000 to the fund.

Participation of the Staff Senate:

- Habitat for Humanity-Fund Raising and joining with others in the community to build a home for one of our students.
- Voter Registration and Campaigning for President Obama (Encouraging students and staff to go out to register and vote).
- Health Fair (Ongoing walking groups, way to health).
- Sew Unique (helping students with customer service skills, garment construction skills, business skills, including charging a small fee that allows them to buy supplies to help keep the business going).
- Chancellor’s Toy Drive (for children in the community).
- Durham Rescue Mission (clothing and health products Drive).
- R. N. Harris Rock and Read (reading to Kindergartners and first graders).
- Sister Network (supporting Cancer Survivors through fundraiser, Walking for the Cure).
- Pre-paid Legal-Assistant (importance of having a Will).
- Realtors (Home Ownership).
- Higher Education (taking advantage of our 9 semester hours and book voucher program).
- Chancellor’s Book Loan Program (where staff taking a class can get at least one book free that semester).
- Leadership Training Workshop (for leaders to understand the importance of comment, availability and liability).

Prepared by Ms. Rebie Coleman
September 2008