Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Bert Wagner, President, at 10:05 a.m. Roll was called by Diann Brodnax, Secretary. A quorum was present.


Guest Speakers

Dr. Judith Mann, Tina Rich and April Boggs – LU Strong Program

LU Strong is a program helping students that were impacted from Harvey storm. Students, if eligible, may receive funds to help with tuition, mental health sessions, food, clothing, technology, and other needs. Staff that are attending classes are eligible to apply for assistance. LU Strong staff are committed to helping as much as possible. Students are given resources and support whether they are eligible for funds or not. Dr. Mann asked that Council members help get the word out to those impacted to contact LU Strong for assistance. For those impacted from Imelda storm would need to contact the Cardinal Emergency Fund for assistance. A handout was provided with more information.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Staff Council Officers met with the LU Executives in September.

- The Executives were given an update of the upcoming Staff Awards Ceremony.
- The N.E.S.T. Holiday Project was discussed, and Staff Council received approval to move forward with the project. The project will be tied to the Annual President’s Holiday Breakfast.
- Dr. Evans asked that Staff Council work with Faculty Senate to jazz up the Staff Appreciation Luncheon for April 2020.

A sign-up sheet was passed around for Council members to sign up for committee work.

Community Service: No report.

Staff Awards Ceremony:

- November 6, 2019 – Staff Awards Ceremony – 3:30 – 5:00 pm 8th floor Library
- This year lapel pins will be replaced with portfolios.
- All service award recipients will receive a glass award instead of framed certificates.
- Light finger desserts will be provided at the reception.
- A sign-up sheet was provided for volunteers to help the day of the ceremony. Those volunteering will need to attend the ceremony rehearsal and wear Staff Council polo or red shirt with nice slacks/skirts.
- Refer to Staff Awards Ceremony handout for more updates.
Staff Social Events:
- The committee will meet to discuss ideas to jazz up the Staff Appreciation Luncheon in April 2020.

Student Success: No report.
Communications: No report.
Staff Relations: No report.
Nominations: No report.
Nominations Drive: No report.
Bylaws Committee: No report.

Unfinished Business:

- Diann Brodnax, Secretary/Past President, stated a requisition for Staff Council shirts had been submitted. A target date of November 1, 2019 was given to Classic Forms to receive the shirts.

New Business:
Bert Wagner discussed the following Staff Council business:
The Staff Council Suggestion Box received a few suggestions/questions.
- Issue - Parking Lot G-3 – employees are not able to park in this lot closest to the front of the building due to student’s vehicles occupying parking spaces as visitors and when it rains, employees must walk through high water. Lot G-3 has been reviewed/approved by Executives as visitor only parking due to the high number of prospective students and visitor attending events held by Foundation, Advancement and Alumni Affairs in JGC ‘A’ and ‘B’.
- Issue – Can we work four 10-hour days, so we do not have to use Comp Days or Vacation Days to have off on Friday. Cathy Benson, HR explained that working four 10-hour days during Spring Break Week would allow an employee to gain credit towards Comp Time so taking Friday off without using vacation days is possible. This falls under the discretion that Supervisors must adjust hours worked by employees they oversee.

Good of the Order:
- Division of Global Diversity, Inclusion and Intercultural Affairs will host Day of the Dead – October 31, 2019 5pm – 10 pm, Dining Hall Lawn.
- Campus Wheelchair Basketball Tournament will be held October 9th and 10th, 2019 2pm-6pm, Rec Center Basketball Courts.
- Bert provided a handout, Rethinking Stress. The article was written by LU alumna Bethany Aiena. Please share with your co-workers.
- Tina Siau, Council Member, shared information about Cardinal Communities and asked Council members to consider volunteering. Volunteers receive a stipend. Contact Celine Hodge for more information.

The next Staff Council meeting will be November 12, 2019 in John Gray Center, Mason Room.

Julie Walker moved to adjourn the meeting and Sherika King-Lowe seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diann Brodnax
Diann Brodnax, Staff Council Secretary
LU Strong Program

Are you an LU student experiencing hardship as a result of the impact caused by Hurricane Harvey?

- Housing and/or vehicle issues
- Hunger
- Mental health challenges
- Lack of books, clothes, etc.
- Income loss
- Difficulty paying for tuition
- Unable to pay bills
- Unable to pay for child care

The LU Strong Program for Hurricane Harvey Assistance at Lamar University provides financial assistance and/or resources to LU students personally affected by Hurricane Harvey, with a priority for those with the greatest need.

This fund provides support for currently enrolled or accepted students who have exhausted all other resources. LU Strong funds or resources do not have to be repaid.

The LU Strong Program is funded by generous grants from the United States Department of Education, the Rebuild Texas Fund, and the Qatar Harvey Fund.

Current Students

For Current Students enrolled in a degree or credential program for at least 3 credit hours (undergraduate or graduate level) during your first semester of program participation.

Accepted Students

For Accepted Students entering LU in the upcoming semester enrolled in a degree or credential program for at least 3 credit hours (undergraduate or graduate level) during your first semester of program participation.
Eligibility for Funds and Resources

To be eligible for LU Strong assistance, you must:

- Be a current LU student, or an accepted student entering LU in the upcoming semester, enrolled in a degree or credential program for at least 3 credit hours (undergraduate or graduate level) during your first semester of program participation.
- Have a financial hardship that has been caused directly by the impact of Hurricane Harvey.
- Be in good student conduct standing.
- Have used all current awarded financial aid.
- Have a completed FAFSA application on file with the LU Office of Financial Aid.
- Complete all questions on the application and provide supporting documentation.

Expenses Eligible for Coverage by the LU Strong Program

Funding and resources include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency or temporary housing expenses (homelessness)
- Food
- Essential utilities (electric, gas, water, etc.)
- Mental health expenses and support for on-campus services
- On-campus resiliency workshops
- Tuition
- Academic supplies (books, technology, etc.)
- Essential personal belongings damaged or lost due to Harvey (clothing, etc.)
- Other expenditures that would otherwise prevent continued enrollment

Application Process

1. Submit an online application. The LU Strong office will gather and review the necessary information from each applicant.
2. You will be contacted by a Case Manager to complete an intake review and complete an individualized support plan.
3. Any financial support will be made by a selection committee appointed by the Dean of Students.
4. You will be notified via email of the decision pertaining to your request for funds, typically within 2-3 business days.
5. Campus Emergency Funds will be credited to your student account. If you have balances owed to the university, you will still be eligible to have these funds.

Other Support for Students

If you are an LU enrolled student who is experiencing these types of difficulties (homelessness, food insecurity, etc.) and you were not directly impacted by Hurricane Harvey, please complete the LU CARE form.
Staff Awards Ceremony
November 6, 2019 – Staff Awards Ceremony – 3:30 – 5:00 pm 8th floor Library

* Food
  Assorted Freshly Baked Cookies – 10 DOZ
  House – Made Fudge Brownies – 10 DOZ
  Pecan Dessert Bar – 10 DOZ
  Lemon Dessert Bar – 10 DOZ
  Seasonal Fruit Display – per person – 75
  Freshly Brewed Coffee – 1 GAL
  Cold Iced Tea – 1 GAL
  Cold Water – 1 GAL

* Awards
  Replace 5/10 Year Certificates with glass awards
  Replace Lapel Pins with portfolios
    5/10/15 Year Recipients – Gray/Black
    20/25/30/35 Year Recipients – Black/Silver
    40/45/50+ Year Recipients – Black/Gold

* Backdrop / Red Carpet
  Received draft from Marketing

* Staff Awards Announcement
  Announcement should go out with Monday Announcements Sep 16th

* Photo Montage
  Asking Council members to help take photos of staff in their areas to include in the video.
  Ask if there are existing photos to include.
  Include Staff Council photos

* Council members on Awards Committee
  Mandy Arceneaux, Johnny Jarrell, Sherika Lowe, Yolanda Monroe, Sharon Sanders, Ashley Sheehan, Tina Siau, Julie Walker, Jon-Michael Wallace

* DSA Nominees
  Still provide certificates for DSA Nominees
  • Allow for wheelchair access to the front for award presentation
For most people, "stress" is negative - the word triggers images of people running around in circles, yelling obscenities, and pulling their hair out. But can stress be positive?

**When is stress helpful?**

Moderation is key for most things in life and, believe it or not, that includes stress. Low to moderate levels can actually be beneficial.

Above all, stress can ensure our survival.

Imagine, out of nowhere, a giant bear walks up (are they native to Beaumont? Just go with it.).

In the fraction of a second that it takes you to consciously decide how you are going to respond to this ferocious beast, your body has already begun to prepare. Before you ever come to your decision, your nervous system is already equipping your body by boosting the systems that will help you fight or run and shutting down other systems to conserve energy.

**When is stress harmful?**

When stress gets out of control, due to severity or frequency, and starts to impact our quality of life it becomes problematic. The same physiological changes that helped you battle the bear can have long-term, negative impacts when not properly managed. This can manifest both physically and mentally.

Physically, prolonged stress can cause increases in muscle tension (headaches, pain), poor sleep, high blood pressure, increased skin issues or breakouts, decreased immune response, higher blood sugar, and various gastrointestinal issues.

Mentally, stress can make us feel irritable or moody, make it more difficult for us to concentrate or remember things, and limit our ability to problem solve.
What happens to our body when we experience stress?

The central nervous system, which controls most functions of our brain and body, contains multiple sub-systems including the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS is responsible for regulating all unconscious functions of our body such as our breathing rate, heartbeat, and digestion.

The ANS is further divided into the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Imagine the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) as your alarm system. When the bear enters the quad, your SNS has been evolutionarily trained to kick in and ramp up all unconscious systems that will help us fight, flight, or freeze (i.e., whatever gives us the best chance of survival).

Our heart rate increases, pumping more blood throughout our organs and muscles, our breathing increases to prepare us for action, and our pupils dilate to improve visual acuity. Less important systems like digestion are shut down to conserve energy for the most important systems that will help with our continued existence (that sandwich you had earlier can get digested later).

Whenever danger has been managed or avoided, our parasympathetic nervous system kicks in. This system is similar to getting an “all clear” during a fire drill. Less vital functions kick back on, our breathing and heart rate return to normal levels, and our bodies begin to return to a state of normalcy.

Back in the days of cavemen, this was an excellent feature. You hear rustling in the bushes while visiting your local watering hole, and the sympathetic nervous system sends alarm bells through your body to say “Get out of here! Danger!”

Caveman runs from the watering hole and lives another day to hunt and/or gather.

Presently, however, the dangers of being devoured by lions, tigers, and bears are few and far between. What was once a very valuable system for our survival has not quite adapted to the much safer lives we lead in the present day.
How do I manage my stress?

A big issue with stress is its insidious nature. It may seem obvious, but many people struggle to identify stress triggers so they are not aware of their stress levels until they are ready to explode. The reality is that stress is as inevitable as death and taxes - we all face some level of stress in our lives.

While many of us prioritize and schedule important meetings, we don’t give the same priority to self-care and stress management. Research shows that if we can adopt behaviors that help manage stress after (or before) it occurs, we can decrease its negative effects and improve our response.

1. **Identify your stressors.**

   One of the easiest ways to manage stress is to learn what is causing it. If we view stress on a scale of 1-10 (1 = lowest level), most of us don't notice that we are feeling stress until we are well past level 5. By taking a few moments in our day to stop what we're doing and sit in self-awareness, we can take stock of how we're feeling and if our stressors are in or out of our sphere of control.

   If your triggers are out of your control, spend some time focusing on the things you do control. For example, we can't change the deadline for an assignment, but maybe we can start preparing by researching or starting an outline. We can't control the behaviors of others, but maybe we can control how we respond and how much time we spend around people whose behaviors cause us stress.

2. **Use relaxation techniques.**

   Imagine yourself as a castle. When you learn and use tools such as diaphragmatic (deep) breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery/visualization, and mindfulness meditation you are adding a brick to your defense wall around you. The more you engage in positive practices, the better your defenses will be against outside stressors.

   Check out apps like Insight Timer or Headspace, or search YouTube for relaxation tutorials and guided meditations.

3. **Learn problem-solving skills.**

   **Writing through this process** allows us to externalize the stressors jumbled in our heads and think about solutions in a logical and systematic way.

   - Write your problem out clearly. Simplify your issue so that even your grandmother could understand it.
   - Brainstorm multiple solutions.
   - List the pros and cons of each generated solution.
   - Choose the best option and try it out.
4. Exercise.

Exercise is an incredible, underrated tool for supporting good mental health. It gives us more energy, improves sleep, and aids relaxation. Exercising with others can give us valuable social support while exercising alone can give us time to think through and process our problems, confronting them with a clear mind.

Make note, however, that balance is key. While good practice, exercise can also be abused as a form of procrastination. You may become a pro athlete from all your exercising, but that midterm exam or paper will still haunt you.

5. Improving sleep habits.

Sleep is vital for both physical and mental health. Good sleep hygiene, such as keeping a regular sleep schedule or having a bedtime routine can go a long way in terms of improving your sleep.

6. Set boundaries and communicate assertively.

Making boundaries and expectations known to others gives us a chance to express our wants, needs, and desires in a clear and straightforward manner, while still respecting the viewpoints of others.

Not to be mistaken with aggressive communication (which can leave no room for compromise and can hurt our relationships with others) assertive communication allows us to ask for what we want and set boundaries we need to manage our stress. If others are taking advantage, assertive communication allows you to place a boundary and express your viewpoints in a way that conveys a clear message but is less likely to lead to arguments or communication breakdowns. This form of communication is not second nature and takes practice, however, there are endless resources on learning to communicate more assertively.

7. Redefine your beliefs about stress.

Because stress is inevitable, experts have begun to shift focus on how it is perceived. Leading expert and health psychologist, Dr. Kelly McGonigal, gives an informative TED Talk concerning views on stress. Her 15-minute talk discusses how, by shifting our attitude about stress, we can also shift the way it impacts us.

While life has many ups and downs, learning to better navigate the difficult and cumbersome aspects of it can help increase our quality of life.

About the Author: Bethany Aiena

I attended four years of undergrad at Lamar University and six years of graduate school at the University of Mississippi, ultimately earning my Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology in 2017.

The opinions and statements found on the Lamar University blog belong solely to the articles’ authors and contributors and do not necessarily represent the those of Lamar University. Lamar University does not endorse products (unless otherwise stated) and encourages students to use critical thinking and good judgment while navigating online.

This article is posted at https://www.lamar.edu/blogs/lamar-university/2018/07/rethinking-stress-with-bethany-aiena.html

For this handout: Bert Wagner has made some editorial changes (deleting references to student stress).