

# Staff Council Meeting Minutes

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Date/Time: April 20, 2022 1:30PM      Location: Zoom and OL250  
Meeting called by: Staff Council Exec.      Type of meeting: Staff Council Monthly Meeting  
Facilitator: Staff Council Exec.      Note taker: Gina Smith

Attendees: Melissa Chesnut, Selena Foreman, Tony Christian, Amanda Dempsey, Katy Schwartz-Drowns, Duane Havard, Becky Meneely, Helen Konstantopoulos, Jessie Peter, Colin McDonough, Marsha Martin, Adam Randles, Ben Rogers, Lisa Crater, Jill Kain, Julie Roberston, Clarence Green, Krista Barcus.

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## Agenda Items

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### Organizational Structure Support & Strategic Operations Reports

Leadership Advisory Team – Clarence and Krista: Clarence thanked Selena Foreman for her work on the employee engagement survey summary; a Powerpoint of the summary is attached. Clarence – Staff Council will be helpful in closing the trust gap exposed by the engagement survey results.

- Working tirelessly on budget; strategic initiatives, tracking toward 2% increase and \$15 minimum.
- Martindale Hall renovation cost; should receive 50% and will need to raise 50%.
- Working on a partnership with Mosaic.
- Presentation of employee engagement survey went well; Krista has assembled themes and specifics; NLT is working on solutions to concerns; Institutional Research presented a Nessie survey of what is working well and what needs improvement, noting that Northwest rates higher than the benchmarks.
- Wellbeing of employees is a concern. A counselor for employees, Cali Lloyd, is available for employee appointments; there is awareness that students are stressed but employee self-care also should be a priority. The counselor will organize a session to teach employees how to approach colleagues who appear to be struggling with stress.
- The Extended Leadership Team will meet in June to discuss an academic plan, Inclusive Excellence, People Excellence, Wellbeing, and Information Technology.

Faculty Senate – Gina

- Faculty review of employee engagement survey results show that lowering the cost of health care is the highest priority among faculty in 10 of 11 units; the second highest priority is salaries and cost-of-living increases.

Student Senate – TBD; currently no Staff Council representative attending Student Senate meetings. In response to a question from Julie, Clarence reported that Student Senate has been meeting on Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

Board of Regents – Gina

- Recent developments involving the BOR will be reviewed in the last half-hour of the meeting after all other agenda items have been discussed.

Benefits & Wellness Committee – Elainabeth Russo

- In Beth's absence, Selena reported that a new company, USI Benefit Consultants, has been selected to perform services previously supplied by Lockton.

## Ally Affinity Group - Helen Konstantopoulos

- National Sexual Assault Awareness Month
  - Violence against women: it's a men's issue  
<https://youtu.be/ohMve-6LAZU>
  - North Star Advocacy
    - Donations: <https://northstarac.org/our-wish-list/>
    - Volunteer options: <https://northstarac.org/volunteer/>
    - Meghann Kosman attended yesterday's group meeting to define and discuss advocacy.
- <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/media/news/2022/04/01sexualassaultawaremonth.htm>
  - "What were you wearing" - exhibit in Admin building all month
  - **April 20: Violence Prevention Wellness Workshop (today)**
  - **April 21: Dodgeball Tournament**
  - **April 26: Walk a Mile in Her Shoes**
  - **April 27: Denim Day – awareness from a court case in Italy.**

Office of Diversity and Inclusion – Jessie Peter: Planning wonderful and amazing things for fall.

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## Old Business Items:

- Clarification of gender requirements/restrictions for recreational sports teams: applies only to dodgeball tournaments.
- Piano music in the Administration Building: Clarence will be responsible for resolving this issue.
- Mileage rate for travel; possible adjustment to reflect rise in fuel costs. This will be presented as part of the budget; the amount won't be known until the new budget has been approved.
- Can the "use it or lose it" model for vacation and sick leave be changed? A correction was noted that employees do not lose unused sick leave time, which continues to accrue. Staff are concerned about the hours in excess of 192 that are lost by employees working in areas that are short staffed; the lack of sufficient staff results in denials of vacation requests. Krista will discuss the issue with the leaders of departments in this situation.
- A reminder to inform employees about contributions to the "Blue Fridays" initiative supporting the Northwest Missouri Children's Advocacy Task Force; individuals wishing to participate contribute \$1.00 each time to dress in blue.

## New Business Items:

The floor is open for additional nominations of individuals to serve on committees and in executive board positions. Julie reported that after elections were closed, all open spots were filled. Tony Christian and Alex Cruz sent a survey to fill out for committee selections. A large number of people expressed interest in joining the Policy committee, so Tony and Alex sent another survey to request that some individuals shift their committee choice to Engagement or Outreach, both of which needed more members, and adjustments were made. The Policy and Outreach committees each will have five members, the Engagement committee will have eight members. The joint meeting of outgoing and incoming council members will take place in June. The composition of the executive board will be Selena as chair, Tony

will continue as communications chair, Troy as past chair, Melissa Chesnut as chair-elect, and Lisa Crater as secretary position. The executive board slate was approved by acclamation. Julie will not be able to attend the May meeting; Helen will substitute for her, and will present comments from the survey about the elections process. Individuals on the executive board will continue to represent the areas from which they were elected.

## **Committee Reports**

Employee Engagement and Recognition Committee – Melissa Chesnut and Colin McDonough – Thanks to those who helped make and distribute popcorn during the “Poppin’ in the Spring” event. The committee is preparing for the Bearcat Bash, scheduled from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup>. The Bash will be held at the Pavilion, with Hughes Fieldhouse as the location if the weather is inclement. Hot food will be delivered to staff who are unable to attend the Bash due to work schedules and distance from campus. Arrangements will be made for the staff graduate medallions to be engraved; cards were circulated for the addition of congratulatory messages from council members who were present.

Outreach Committee – Marsha Martin - Not as many T-shirts/hoodies were sold as the committee hoped, probably because these items also were sold last year. The payment process also presented challenges for purchasers who wanted to buy more than one item; the current payment system didn’t accommodate multiple-item orders. Approximately \$510.00, including donations, was collected for the scholarship fund. Bake sale fundraiser averages from past years were between \$300 and \$400.00.

Policy Committee – Julie Robertson – A spreadsheet of council members and committee assignments was received from Alex Cruz. All members of the Council have made their committee service selections.

## **Engagement Survey Action Items**

- Planning for future increases in health care costs and premiums; details are included in the attached Engagement Survey summaries.

## **Employee Suggestions/Comments/Concerns**

- Recent actions and public response to the anticipated change in the NWMSU president’s position were briefly discussed.
- Staff morale is being affected by uncertainty in the selection process for the new university president; low pay not keeping pace with inflation, especially fuel prices; the solitary nature of work conditions for some staff, particularly in Facilities Services, with no opportunity for engagement and camaraderie with colleagues; the possibility of mandatory overtime due to unfilled positions, and general disrespect and lack of recognition for the jobs performed by custodial and maintenance staff. Low salaries for these positions are hindering new employee recruitment. Currently seven custodial positions are vacant, and the vacancies will increase as current staff and/or their partners graduate. A request was made to explore the possibility of a meal plan for custodians working the night shift since on-campus options for dinner at that time are limited.
- Frequency and number of event notification emails; can this process be improved? Perhaps send them out in groups instead of individual emails for each event? It was agreed that this issue should be addressed in each department or area, since some employees want frequent notifications of upcoming events and some do not.
- Although employees receive free tuition for Northwest courses, online certificate programs are not included in the free tuition program. Krista explained that certificate programs are provided and administered by third-party vendors, not by Northwest, so the cost is not under Northwest’s control.

- Please fill out the food service survey; Aramark's contract ends next year and new options are under consideration.

**Announcements / Area Reports:** None were presented.

**Next Meeting**

**May 18, 2022 1:30pm- 3:30pm – OL250 and Zoom**