

To: USF President's Cabinet
From: Domanique Crosby, Staff Council President
Jill Ballard, Staff Council Vice President
Amy F. Joseph, Staff Council Clerk
Re: Staff Council Survey Follow Up and Recommendations
Date: April 1, 2024

Introduction and Context

The Staff Council aims to be an inclusive and transparent voice for all staff members at USF and to be a deliberative body offering appropriate recommendations to the University President and Cabinet that address staff concerns. As stated in our Mission, “[Staff Council] will act as a conduit to engage and support our fellow staff members and the surrounding community...[including] actively participat[ing] in shared governance to facilitate positive and collegial communication in support of the University's Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan.” To date, the Staff Council has worked to embody this mission in all of our actions:

- The Staff Council has established an active partnership with Fr. Fitzgerald and Provost Fung in order to participate in shared governance.
- The Staff Council has appreciated participating in conversations with the President, Provost, and Faculty Unions as a beginning point to shared governance on campus.
- The Staff Council has also worked to establish monthly meetings with our liaison, Diane Nelson. These meetings allow us to talk about our ideas for change before bringing them to administration.
- The Staff Council is getting our footing as an organization and defining our presence on campus.

We write this letter in order to make Fr. Fitzgerald aware of big concerns from the USF staff. The Staff Council gathers the concerns of all staff and has consolidated larger concerns here. This letter focuses on concerns we've learned of in the staff survey and concerns that have come up from staff members. While the Staff Council is aware of the university's financial state, we still find it important to bring staff concerns to the forefront. It is our role to share concerns and provide ideas for moving forward. This letter serves to do that with staff compensation and shared governance concerns.

Staff Survey Priorities

Overview

The Staff Council conducted a survey of all staff members in October 2023 and sent a [summary report](#) to Father Fitzgerald (cc'ing Staff Council liaison Diane Nelson) in December 2023. The topics this memo addresses are part of the "Next Steps" set forth in the report.

Staff Compensation and Professional Advancement

Last semester, a staff member asked the Staff Council, "What is USF doing to ensure greater pay equity and consistency for staff across campus in ways that are resonant and consistent with the Strategic Plan, which prioritizes USF being an equitable and extraordinary place to work?" This question was echoed by findings from the subsequent Staff Survey conducted by the Staff Council in October 2023, which placed staff compensation as USF staff's number one priority. Thankfully, the President's email to the community on March 26, 2024 made clear that compensation is also an Administration priority, for which we are grateful.

While we are glad to see compensation keeping a better pace with the cost of living this coming fiscal year, the Staff Council hopes this will remain a priority in future years. As one Staff Survey respondent noted, "Staff compensation has not been keeping up with general inflation. U.S. inflation rate for 2020 was 1.2%, for 2021 was 4.7%, for 2022 was 8.0%. Although the projected rate for 2023 is around 4%, we have to consider the cumulative effect of such figures over the course of multiple years. Simply put, salaries at USF have not been keeping up with the actual cost-of-living in the SF Bay Area." According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI Inflation Calculator, an employee making \$60,000 in January 2020 has the equivalent buying power of someone making \$71,732 today. In order just to break even, a staff member would have to have received raises equivalent to \$11,732 over four years, or almost 20% over \$60,000.

Exacerbating this difficult situation, newer employees are being hired at salaries that are relatively close to what a tenured employee makes. This is not to diminish how crucial it is to hire new staff at competitive rates, rather, it is a point of inequity that must be addressed. The Staff Council is aware USF is conducting a Pay Equity Study to examine such discrepancies, and it is our hope that the study rights such inequalities.

Staff compensation issues are further complicated by an often opaque system of professional advancement, which could help raise staff salaries through promotions. Some employees are rewarded with rapid promotions and corresponding changes in titles, while others labor for years with few chances to advance or change their job title, despite increased responsibilities. There do not seem to be any common, well-understood metrics for advancement. Given that budget cuts and layoffs have left more staff positions unfilled than ever before, the lack of promotions and corresponding salary increases is of some concern. As one staff member noted in a Staff

Council meeting, “This is especially pressing for many longer-term employees, who often encounter what we can call a responsibility creep, or the expansion of their roles or responsibilities over time without being professionally acknowledged, or having this expansion reflected in either their title, job description, or compensation.”

Staff are integral to student retention in ways that are often unacknowledged, from quickly and expertly providing personal attention and answers to students, to forming deep relationships that increase students’ feelings of belonging, to making students feel that they are important every step of the way through their college career. The role every-day staff encounters play in student retention is often invisible despite providing excellent, high-touch support to students across the University being crucial to retaining them. Continuing to push for fewer staff, merged departments with less administrative support, and other short-term solutions to our budget crisis increase the problem making staff feel undervalued.

The Staff Council understands the enormous complexity in balancing our budget given the deficits we are facing and appreciates the recent pledge to raise staff compensation. As Strategic Plan Working Group #5 stated, “We must embrace a shift in the culture of USF that enacts policies, programs, and budgetary decisions that foreground what is needed for an equitable and extraordinary workplace.”

Shared Governance and Administrative Transparency

In alignment with WSCUC’s recommended action item for USF to “[d]evelop formal, timely and informative channels of communication that allow for advice and dialogue across the campus prior to major decision-making and implementation (CFRs 3.7, 4.2, 4.3) [emphasis added], the staff survey indicated strong staff interest in shared governance, consultative decision-making, and administrative transparency.

There are many challenges that face USF in developing an inclusive decision-making structure that is proactive and consultative. As WSCUC noted, USF should “[d]evelop a formal deliberative body, independent of the Faculty Association Policy Boards, to establish shared governance that will improve lines of communication and ensure participatory decision-making (CFRs 2.4, 3.10, 4.5, 4.6;).” While this recommendation highlights a faculty-based senate, the need for a broad shared governance structure that includes faculty, staff, students and administration was noted by Strategic Plan Working Group No. 6 in their recommendations.

While the Staff Council is ostensibly a shared governance body, in the almost two years of its existence it has rarely been consulted about university-wide decisions and initiatives. Rather, the Staff Council is typically presented with information from administrators. While appreciated, this is not in the spirit of consultative decision-making prior to the fact. In the two shared governance meetings organized by the President’s and Provost’s offices, most discussion has

revolved around student retention strategies rather than shared governance processes. While the Executive Board also appreciates its monthly meeting with Staff Council liaison and Associate Vice President Diane Nelson, most topics concern policies and activities that are in process, without a consultation component. In another case, the IDEA subcommittee submitted a recommendation for extended mental health benefits for staff, but when this was rolled out, the communication sent out did not acknowledge the Staff Council's role or influence. Other requests have hit dead-ends, such as promised President Cabinet's minutes, which have not been updated since October 2022, despite repeated requests from the Executive Board.

Staff Council recognizes its role as a crucial part of USF's developing shared governance body, which will be able to offer many opportunities to improve lines of communication and ensure participatory decision-making across the institution.

Recommendations

Informed by these sources and above concerns, Staff Council recommends the following:

1. Increase equity for staff across the university, adjust compensation structures to ensure staff are compensated appropriately and keep up with cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area.
 - a. Publish the results from the pay equity study so staff may be aware of the current state of staff compensation and the administration's plan for moving forward.
2. Establish more transparent professional advancement opportunities.
 - a. Outline ways staff are able to advance in their position with checkpoints for progress.
3. Establish a working shared governance body, prioritize determining shared governance processes to allow for consultative decision-making among stakeholders prior to final decision-making, where appropriate by January 2025.
 - a. Include Staff Council as part of shared governance process planning along with other stakeholders.
 - b. Increase shared governance meetings to at least twice a semester, preferably monthly.

Strategic Plan 2027 and Staff Priorities

In addition, the Staff Council Executive Board has [created a table](#) that cross-references the Staff Survey priority results, USF's Strategic Plan 2027, Staff and Shared Governance working group recommendations, WCUSC recommendations, the Strategic Plan dashboard, and the Staff Council's current action items. The Staff Council uses this cross-reference table to guide our work ensuring it is in alignment with the Strategic Plan. The Staff Council links this here to showcase connections and work being done to advance the Strategic Plan.