

STAFF COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - Wednesday, December 13, 2023

Voting Members Present:

Executive Board: Domonique Crosby (President), Jill Ballard (Vice President), Amy F. Joseph (Clerk and Meeting Recorder), Melissa Thompson (Immediate Past President)

Staff Council Members: Claudine Bibeau Parks, Steven Bosso, Danielle Castillo, Kimberly Bruno, Janice Chuakay, Ella Frazer, Elisabeth Merkel, Mark Papadopoulos, Tina Ricafrente, Alexandra Schaeffer, Nicholas Ynami, Ken Yoshioka

Voting Members Absent: Erin Echols, Corey Kowalczyke, Carolina Martinez, Joshua McDermott, Luwei Xie, Will Vitagliano

Guests in Attendance: Staff Members

I. Welcome/Roll Call (Determination of Quorum)/Approve Staff Council Meeting Minutes November 8, 2023 – Domonique (5 min)

- Meeting called to order at 12:01 PM by the Staff Council President.
- Notice made that the meeting is recorded for note-taking purposes.
- Bylaws state meetings are open to all staff including the President's Cabinet and Leadership Team and there will be a Q&A/open discussion session during the meeting for all staff in attendance.
- Staff Council Member roll call conducted: 16 present, 6 absent, quorum reached.
- Approval of Staff Council Meeting Minutes for November 8, 2023 meeting.

Motion

- Meeting minutes from the November 8, 2023 meeting were approved. The motion to approve was made by Domonique Crosby. Second motion was made by Danielle Castillo. Motion carried.

II. Updates from Executive Board – Domonique (8 min)

- The Clerk announced that the Spring 2024 Staff Council meetings will continue on the second Wednesday of the month from 12 pm to 1 pm. The Zoom link for the spring meetings will also remain the same (<https://usfca.zoom.us/j/87396988358>)
 - The President reported back on the December 8, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting. Much of the meeting was focused on the tuition and fees increase for fiscal year 2025, about which Father Fitzgerald sent a campus email on December 8th at 4 pm. The Board approved an overall 3.8% increase for the next academic school year, with undergraduate tuition increasing 3.9%. There was a robust discussion about the increase in the meeting; the trustees were initially hesitant to approve it. Highlights of the discussion included remarks from the undergraduate student government representative, who pointed out that the increase did not align with what students wanted. Questions were raised, such as how can USF become an institution that is not tuition dependent, so that students don't continue to see a rise in their tuition? The trustees were also concerned about the budget for the current academic year and requested the University present a balanced budget at the next Board of Trustees meeting in March. As Father Fitzgerald communicated in his December 8th email, the University's annual net tuition revenue this year is approximately \$8.3 million less than budgeted. In light of this, trustees are interested in where we can make budget cuts. As a result, there will be some operating expense cost savings that will be coming in the beginning of the year. However, Father Fitzgerald is still committed to ensuring staff compensation increases if needed, to ensure that staff are compensated appropriately.
 - The President added that the Board discussed a new law that passed in San Francisco that will impact our expenses for the next fiscal year. The law focuses on the infrastructure of buildings and could require a hundred-million-dollar retrofitting for our campus to meet this new law. The University will be looking into if this needs to be done all at once or if it can take place over multiple years. This will have an impact going forward.
 - Another topic at the Board of Trustees meeting included the state of the alumni and how alumni engagement could help fill future cost gaps. The Office of Alumni Engagement is hoping to engage 50,000 alum in the future.
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- The President went on to provide an update on the Executive Board's monthly meeting with Staff Council liaison Diane Nelson. First, the Executive Board sent Diane an email about the budgeted pay equity survey discussed in previous meetings. Some of the questions posed included what are the specific goals of the survey, what are the anticipated impacts and outcomes, if a vendor selection process has begun and what the criteria is, how the survey intersects with the Strategic Plan, if a summary will be made available to staff, and if there is any role Staff Council can play in the process. The Executive Board also asked yet again about the lack of President [Cabinet minutes](#) being posted to the website; minutes have not been posted since October 2022. Diane stated she would follow up again.
- The President stated that the Staff Council would use the open forum portion of the agenda to review the Staff Survey Report and open the floor to Staff Council members and staff-in-attendance to provide feedback, thoughts, and suggestions. The Clerk added that the report was submitted to Father Fitzgerald and Diane Nelson the previous Friday, but the Executive Board had not received any response or comment to date. The Clerk provided the link to the [Staff Survey Report](#) in the chat.

III. Update on the Staff Council Subcommittees – Jill (6 mins)

Awards and Recognition – Ken Yoshioka (Chair)

- The Clerk noted Human Resources recently invited the Staff Council to take over the annual Service and Merit Awards event. The Executive Board declined the invitation, unwilling to transfer the duties belonging to a paid staff position to an uncompensated consultative body such as the Staff Council. However, the Executive Board consulted the Staff Council, including the Awards and Recognition subcommittee, to discuss how the Staff Council could participate and support the event.
- The chair addressed this issue, commenting that while the subcommittee also felt the entire process was too difficult for the Staff Council to take on, the Council would be glad to help out on the day of the event or contribute in another, smaller way.
- The Executive Board will follow up with Diane Nelson to continue this discussion.

Communications - Nick Ynami (Chair)

- The chair confirmed that the December newsletter went out and thanked everyone who contributed. In the future, the subcommittee will send emails to the subcommittee chairs to solicit additional items for the newsletter.
- Subcommittee member Ella Frazer will take over as Communications chair for the spring.

Elections & Governance - Will Vitagliano (Chair)

- No one from the subcommittee was in attendance to provide updates.

Inclusion, Diversity for Education and Accountability – Corey Kowalczyke (Chair)

- As the subcommittee chair was absent, another member provided an update. The subcommittee met with a representative from the ADEI office after Thanksgiving about future collaboration, plans, and to ensure the Staff Council subcommittee wasn't reinventing the wheel, should ADEI already have common projects already in progress. They also discussed updating the staff resources listed on the ADEI website.

Institutional Effectiveness and Safety - Claudine Bibeau Parks (Chair)

- The chair reported that the subcommittee met with Ken Yoshioka, Instructional Technologist and Staff Council member, about accessibility infrastructure on campus. Conversations will continue in the new year.

Professional Development – Kimberly Bruno (Chair)

- The chair reported continued work on the new staff welcome letter and researching staff sabbaticals.

IV. Update on Other University Committee(s) (3 mins)

University Budget Advisory Council (UBAC): Elisabeth Merkel

- Elisabeth began by reminding staff that UBAC's purpose is to advise the President, Provost, and Cabinet regarding the University's budget, and provide a vital link between the University leadership and the community. In this advisory role, UBAC makes recommendations on the University budget and financial plan, accounting for both current and future needs.
- While unable to attend the last UBAC meeting, Elisabeth learned that there was a vibrant discussion about the tuition increases, about which the Staff Council President has already shared. The next UBAC meeting will address budget assist requests, as now is the time in the annual budget cycle where offices and departments from across the University submit requests for funds (both discretionary and non-discretionary). Discretionary expenses in particular will be discussed. Other increases, such as contracted increases in utilities, are non-discretionary and are usually not up for debate. UBAC then drafts questions and information for the President and Leadership to review, and hopes they take UBAC's guidance into account when making final decisions.

V. New Business/Q&A/Open Discussion (36 mins)

Topic: Staff Survey Report

- The Executive Board spent time reviewing the purpose, methodology, response statistics, questions, and results of the Staff Survey Report, all of which can be found [here](#).
- Highlights included:
 - The survey was sent to 1,357 recipients, with an approximately 23% response rate
 - Of the 23 priority areas listed in the survey, the top three were, in order of priority: 1) staff compensation; 2) the financial health of the University; and 3) staff morale. These three priorities were followed closely by student retention and support and administrative transparency.
 - The Staff Council President quoted a staff response that particularly encapsulates how a lot of staff are feeling: "My biggest concern is compensation. I am personally incredibly overworked, and while I love my job and am good at it, I always think about leaving in the back of my mind because working at USF keeps me living paycheck-to-paycheck. I think if my team and I were evaluated annually specifically to see what all has been added to our plates, they'd see that we need larger raises/ compensation re-evaluation and certainly a title change or promotion. I wish this were already the culture here because there's nothing like loving your job and place of employment, but feeling like the compensation and recognition is inaccurate/unfair."
 - The full, ranked list of priorities—particularly the top three—will help guide the Staff Council in its work and help us set priorities.
 - A majority of survey respondents were aware of Staff Council, but a similar majority had not attended a meeting to date.
 - Areas in which staff felt Staff Council were effective included listening and representing concerns, bringing employees together to form the Staff Council, and providing a direct line to Leadership/the Board of Trustees.
 - Areas in which staff felt Staff Council could improve included better communicating the Council's work, allowing for more direct staff feedback, and focusing on more concrete actions and tangible goals.
 - In terms of shared governance, staff would most like Staff Council to have direct communications with Leadership, participate in decision-making, and partner with University divisions/departments.
 - The Staff Council next steps will involve shifting some of our action items to better align with staff's top priorities, evaluating the feedback we received to improve the Staff Council, and examine how we show up for staff and improve staff engagement.
 - The Staff Council will also use the survey to support our work with the Administration regarding shared governance.
 - The Executive Board, in partnership with the rest of the Staff Council and using the staff survey as a guide, will draft a letter to Administration presenting select action items we hope to have addressed.
- Staff were invited to respond to the Staff Survey Report, either here in the meeting, via email to staffcouncil@usfca.edu, or via the [Staff Council web form](#).

- The Clerk noted that Staff Council had previously discussed the importance of staff compensation and advancement prior to the survey results coming out, and now we see this issue is indeed staff's number one concern. While there is understandably tension between USF's difficult financial situation and the need for increased staff compensation, the Executive Board hopes to draft a document to send to Leadership after additional research and consultation with staff.
- A Staff Council member asked how some subcommittees should approach choosing/changing action items in light of the top three staff priorities, particularly for those subcommittees that might not have a direct connection to the top three issues. The member pointed out that even if a subcommittee's action item is not addressing one of the top three priorities, it can still have a positive influence on staff.
- The Vice President acknowledged this was the first time the Staff Council has conducted a survey to determine staff priorities, so there will be some experimentation regarding how we revise or shift action items. Some subcommittees' action items might have the "flavor" of a related high priority, which works well, or an item can be tailored or rewritten to better align with staff needs. The Staff Council has also talked about making the survey an annual process in the fall, which could continue to shape action items in the future.
- The Clerk added that the Staff Survey Report shows the ranking of all twenty-three priority areas, so subcommittees' action items can relate to another of the highly ranked priorities, particularly since many overlap. The Clerk concurred with the Staff Council member that action items don't have to only connect to the top three, given all the intersections and variety of positive outcomes.
- The Clerk first noted she was commenting as a regular Staff Council member and not speaking for the Executive Board. Some thoughts that arose after reading the survey results included the possibility of revisiting some subcommittees to determine if they are grouped the best way possible around staff issues, having more interaction with Father Fitzgerald or other Cabinet members, evaluating the format of the Staff Council meetings for any improvements, exploring if producing more written documents would improve our effectiveness, examining how to adjust fluidly to new information/situations as a body, increasing staff-at-large participation, and identifying particularly achievable goals. The Clerk also understands the Staff Council will not always get everything we ask for, so how and when do we move on to different goals?
- The Vice President noted there is a lot of interest in direct communication with leadership, but we don't have a formal structure set up yet. There has been one meeting about shared governance with Father Fitzgerald that included the Executive Board and other participants, but exactly what shared governance means is still being developed. What a future shared governance structure looks will connect to a lot of things we are discussing today. This survey will also shape our direct asks of Administration and maybe change some of the work of the subcommittees. There are a lot of potential actions that can come out of our survey.
- A staff member contributed that they strongly agree with the quote about compensation and overwork that the President read aloud, particularly in terms of having things continually added to staff's plates. Additionally, when conversations happen on campus around our tuition dependence and student retention, they often don't focus on the price of a USF education. One of the biggest reasons many students are leaving is they just can't afford to stay. Students transfer to other universities because USF is not economically feasible for them. It seems like staff are always asked to jump through so many hoops, spin so many plates, trying to retain students and help them feel they belong. But we're not being honest about how things like tuition increases, or other expenses like campus food, affect student retention. Many students cannot afford three meals a day. Even though we say the standard meal plan is not for eating three meals a day, but more like two meals on campus supplemented by other food, it's just not feasible to live on \$21 per day for your bill plan.
- The staff member concluded by expressing their hope that as the Staff Council moves priorities forward and discusses student retention and belonging, that we think about the ways we are all complicit in making it infeasible for students to stay, even if students truly feel like they belong to the USF community.
- The President expressed her appreciation for this thought and agreed. We focus a lot on what we can do as staff, but one of the biggest concerns and issues for students is cost. If they can't afford to be at the University, it won't matter what staff are doing.
- The President acknowledged that there is a lot to digest and that staff might need more time to reflect on the survey results and share any thoughts. The President encouraged staff to contact the Staff Council with any feedback should they have it. It won't be the last time we talk about these topics; the conversation will continue. We appreciate everyone coming to hear the results, and please share the Staff Survey Report link with others, as we would love to have as many people as possible weigh in on what they've seen and how they feel about USF.

VI. Announcements (0 min)

- None.

VII. Meeting Adjourned at 12:59 PM by Domonique Crosby, Staff Council President

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 10, 2024. Click on this link to join (registration no longer required):

<https://usfca.zoom.us/j/87396988358>

Full schedule on [staff council webpage](#)

SUMMARY OF MOTIONS

- Meeting minutes from the November 8, 2023 meeting were approved. The motion to approve was made by Domonique Crosby. Second motion was made by Danielle Castillo. Motion carried.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

- Staff Council will use the results of the staff survey to revisit action items with staff priorities in mind, and add new projects/tasks as appropriate
- The Executive Board, with Staff Council, will work on a document asking Administration to address select issues/action items/priorities