

STAFF COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - Wednesday, April 10, 2024

Voting Members Present:

Executive Board: Domonique Crosby (President), Amy F. Joseph (Clerk and Meeting Recorder)

Staff Council Members: Claudine Bibeau Parks, Steven Bosso, Danielle Castillo, Kimberly Bruno, Janice Chuakay, Erin Echols, Corey Kowalczyke, Carolina Martinez, Elisabeth Merkel, Mark Papadopoulos, Tina Ricafrente, Will Vitagliano, Nicholas Ynami, Ken Yoshioka

Voting Members Absent: Jill Ballard (Vice President), Ella Frazer, Alexandra Schaeffer, Melissa Thompson (Immediate Past President)

Guests in Attendance: Staff Members

I. Welcome/Roll Call (Determination of Quorum)/Approve Staff Council Meeting Minutes 3/13/24 – Domonique (4 mins)

- 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, 4 absent, quorum reached.
- Approval of Staff Council Meeting Minutes for March 13, 2024 meeting.

Motion

- Meeting minutes from the March 13, 2024 meeting were approved. The motion to approve was made by Domonique Crosby. Second motion was made by Amy F. Joseph. Motion carried.

II. Updates from Executive Board – Domonique (17 mins)

- The Clerk provided an elections update. Eight staff members agreed to serve; as a result, an election will not be held and all eight will be appointed for the 2024-25 term (which starts June 1). Of those eight, three are represented staff, so we will have a total of five represented staff on the Council. We will have 22 total members, which is in alignment with the bylaws, which requires approximately 23. The next election will be for the next Executive Board, which new Staff Council members are welcome to run in.
 - The President provided an update about the March Board of Trustees meeting. The meeting focused on the budget, including approving the 2024-25 budget. The budget was approved, but the conversation was somber. The state of the institution was disheartening; we need to figure out what to do to strengthen our financial position. We've used cuts as the solution to budgetary issues, but as one of the trustees mentioned, we can't keep going on that way. We are reaching the end of being able to use cuts to fix the budget deficit. For 2024-25, there was a 58 million dollar deficit that was solved with a variety of cuts, some of which come from not filling positions. We know that will impact staff workloads. The President continues to say there won't be large scale lay-offs, although there will likely be some. The budget was approved on a contingency of 9,434 students; we are currently under 8,800 students. So that's a big gap to fill. If we can't, there could be another round of cuts in the fall semester. The Board is taking the budget crisis seriously.
 - The President gave the State of the Staff report at the Board meeting as well. While ten minutes had been set aside, it had to be cut down to five minutes due to time constraints. The report is [online](#) for those who wish to read it. The Board asked a few questions, such as about boosting staff morale and if staff understood the Board of Trustees' role at the institution (answered in the affirmative; we noted that we wanted to also bring forth issues that don't necessarily fall under the Board's purview, so the Board is aware of our asks). They then went into Executive Session, where one of the topics was about a potential review of Father Fitzgerald next year, which will go across all levels of the institution.
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- The President reported that the Executive Board submitted a recommendation letter to Father Fitzgerald and his Cabinet. The letter addressed the Staff Survey results, staff compensation, and shared governance. Staff can read the letter [online](#). We haven't received a response to date, but if we get one, we will share it.
- The Clerk reported that a staff member was concerned that UPS and Fedex wouldn't be processed, now that the mail contract station is closed. The Executive Board confirmed the mailroom will continue to process/ship UPS and Fedex. USPS supplies will last as long as they have them, after which staff will need to go to a post office to get certain supplies.
- The Clerk announced the Vice President is hoping to put together a staff social of some kind to welcome the new members, along the lines of a self-hosted happy hour, since we don't have our own budget. It will likely be in May; more information is forthcoming. Ideas and suggestions are welcome.
- The President reported on the Executive Board's monthly meeting with Diane Nelson, the Staff Council liaison, in March. A staff concern was raised that not all departments are adhering to the performance review scale. Diane encouraged staff to report such occurrences using the [Whistleblower program](#). It's important that everyone is using the new performance review process and adhering to the different scales in Workday.
- A hybrid work policy has been approved and should be ready to go out soon. It was noted that a hybrid work schedule is still at the discretion of the manager.
- HR approved the Staff Council welcome letter to new staff and provided the Clerk with the contact information for March's new employees. They will send that report through Workday to the Clerk every month to send out the letters. The Professional Development subcommittee was thanked again for their work.
- Finally, the My Learning portal was discussed to determine ways that recognition opportunities and accomplishments can be incorporated/entered into the system in a central place. Diane had some concerns about what can or can't be placed in the portal, but is looking into it for us.

III. Update on the Staff Council Subcommittees – Amy (18 mins)

Awards and Recognition – Ken Yoshioka (Chair)

- The subcommittee is working with Mara Krasts on the Service and Merit Award event on May 2nd. If Staff Council members want to volunteer to help, there is a sign-up sheet in the Staff Council shared drive, under the Awards and Recognition subcommittee folder. The final rehearsal is the Tuesday before the event at 12 noon.

Communications - Ella Frazer (Chair)

- Another subcommittee member gave the update, as the Chair was absent. The newsletter has gone out. As always, please reach out if you want anything included. Subcommittee chairs will be reached out to shortly for any updates for the newsletter.
- A staff member praised the new Community Spotlight feature in the last newsletter. The subcommittee would like to continue to bring in new items.

Elections & Governance - Carolina Martinez (Chair)

- The Chair confirmed the Clerk's earlier update that an election is not necessary, as we have eight new staff willing to join the Council. The subcommittee will help them get set up in time for the start of their term on June 1.
- They will focus on some other elections coming up, including the one for the Executive Board.
- Some of the new Staff Council members were in attendance at the meeting and were given an opportunity to say hello.

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

- IDEA met with the ADEI office to clarify what the current staff affinity groups operating on campus are; note that the language is being shifted to "Employee Resource Groups."
- The subcommittee partnered with Communications to highlight one of the re-envisioned resource groups called the Latinx Community Building Group. The newsletter featured their group and its events.

- The subcommittee began discussions on what a culture of wellness looks like at USF, in line with one of the high priorities from the Staff Survey, which is staff morale. They will discuss more in depth in the summer and hopefully have a recommendation in fall.

Campus Accessibility and Safety - Claudine Bibeau Parks (Chair)

- A subcommittee member reported on USF's Health and Safety Committee session, which took place yesterday. HPS gave a COVID-19 update. USF has adopted the CDC's new guidance, which states that after 24 hours of exposure, if one doesn't have a fever and feels well enough, it's okay to come into the office. The contact tracing form for staff and faculty for COVID exposure has also been updated. Free COVID tests are still available for staff and faculty and can be picked up at UC 5th floor.
- USF's [lactation policy](#) was updated. There are three lactation rooms throughout campus that are available to be reserved.
- At the end of the month there will be an all-day safety presentation chaired by Public Safety. It will be held in McLaren 250. There are multiple sessions throughout the day. Some are in person and some are hybrid. Public Safety is hoping to do this regularly throughout the year. Topics include when to call Public Safety, active shooter presentation, and emergency preparedness.
- Finally, April is Environmental Justice month. Go USF is hosting different events, which can be found on the [website](#).

Professional Development – Mark Papadopoulos (Chair)

- The Staff Council welcome letter to new staff has been finalized and was sent out.
- The subcommittee is discussing free things they can promote or do to help staff. They are considering a “one stop shop” page of staff resources. They are also looking into more outside free resources.
- A Staff Council member mentioned there used to be workshops held by faculty and staff on topics that featured particular skill sets, such as public speaking or building a better presentation. They were helpful and free as peer-to-peer workshops.
- Another Staff Council member wondered if there were USF staff mentor-mentee groups or programs in the past, such as a senior staff member mentoring a new staff person. Staff members mentioned various possibilities, including The President's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women ([PACSW](#)).

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

University Budget Advisory Council (UBAC): Elisabeth Merkel

- At the March UBAC meeting the Council talked about the Office of Budget and Planning reports and updates with Michael Harrington, Associate Vice President for Budget and Planning at the university. These reports are available to the community via their [website](#). Staff who have questions about operating forecasts or budgets can look up the reports.
- The Council discussed their upcoming Communications presentation. UBAC hopes to do a better job communicating about the budget process. A group on UBAC have been creating a presentation to help provide a vital link between university leadership and the community with respect to budget-related items. Some topics include where revenues and expenses come from and how the budget increases or decreases over time. The presentation will be disseminated after a vote for approval this week.

V. New Business/Q&A/Open Discussion (9 mins)

Topic: Bon Appetit

- A staff member raised the issue of the quality and quantity of Bon Appetit food on campus. Quality has been going down, and sometimes they are running out of food. If they have a very long contract—the staff heard 20 years—it could deter students from applying to USF. Bringing food trucks onto campus might help with variety. At SF State, they allow food trucks on certain days. The staff also mentioned some local restaurants have 10% off for USF students. SF State has them for students and staff, particularly at the mall.
- Another staff member mentioned food trucks have previously come to USF on special days.

- A Staff Council member suggested it would be worth working with nearby restaurants and merchants to grant discounts to students and staff. They concurred the quality and quantity of Bon Appetit food has gone down.
- A staff member noted that years ago they ate at Twitter and the food was incredible. They were surprised to find out it was Bon Appetit. So improvement is possible.
- The President noted her past campus had local places that accepted money loaded onto staff's ID cards. You could use your University ID for anything needed around campus. It was a lucrative program that served staff as well as students.
- A Staff Council member conveyed some students' frustration around having Bon Appetit food for cultural campus events. Students would prefer to support a local vendor and serve food that's more authentic, but Bon Appetit rarely makes exemptions. There is an equity component to this; the member would like more clarity around cultural exemptions. In addition, Bon Appetit is much more expensive. It's disheartening to pay more for food that's less authentic and not in support of local vendors.
- A staff member pointed out that Bon Appetit often insists they can make a certain food, so they won't grant an exemption.
- The President noted it used to be easier to get an exemption for cultural food. Bon Appetit states that now they have more diverse people making the food, so they are better staffed to make it themselves.
- A Staff Council member who works with ISSS concurs this is an important issue that has come up for international students as well. Another member who works with the Intercultural Centers added the process for exemptions could be clearer. There's an additional issue where sometimes Bon Appetit states they can make something, and then can't because the kitchen didn't have time. But this information comes late. In one case, they only gave two days notice, which wasn't enough time to work with an outside vendor.
- The Staff Council member also pointed out that no one was informed when Bon Appetit's contract was up for renewal a few years ago; it just happened. This meant no feedback from the community was gathered. They would like to know the actual date their contract is up. They understand it was a seven year contract, rather than 20, but that's word of mouth. It's important to get staff and student feedback the next time before their contract is renewed.
- Several staff mentioned the Bon Appetit CEO is a USF alum. But even if we are tied to Bon Appetit, discussions could still be had about the contract we're choosing.
- A staff member noted the food in the staff lounge is so bad they aren't going anymore.

VI. Announcements (1 min)

- Aide Rodriguez, the program manager for the Masters of International Studies and Migration Studies program, announced that they have been working with Javier Plasencia in the Masters of Museum Studies program to organize an event for April 20th. It is designed to celebrate some of their Latino alumni from the different programs they work with. It's also going to feature an open conversation about what attending graduate school is like for First Generation and Latino students. The community is invited, and there will be food and drinks.

VII. Meeting Adjourned at 12:53 PM by Domonique Crosby, Staff Council President

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Full schedule on [staff council webpage](#)

SUMMARY OF MOTIONS

- Meeting minutes from the March 13, 2024 meeting were approved. The motion to approve was made by Domonique Crosby. Second motion was made by Amy F. Joseph. Motion carried.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

- A Staff Council Social in May is in the planning stages.
- Staff would like more clarity around Bon Appetit's exemptions for cultural campus events.
- Staff were interested to know when Bon Appetit contract is due for renewal and if the community can be solicited for feedback in the future.