

Newsletter

Spring 2021



LETTERS FROM THE OUTGOING & INCOMING PRESIDENTS

The budget has been the primary area of focus over the past few months.

We have emphasized that staff numbers have been dwindling over the years because of repeated budget cuts, that many units have adjusted to doing more with less, and it is hard to imagine what else (or who else) could be cut. Again, we are asking for transparency and early communication.

In addition to the budget, we have advocated for flexibility in the future workforce. We have heard from staff that flexibility is appreciated; that some people prefer to work from home, others prefer to be on campus, then some might want the flexibility to

do both. As we transition back to campus, we are hopeful that the workforce will look different -- in a good way.

What a year it has been. While my time as Staff Senate President will end in April, I trust that the next cohort of senators will continue to listen and advocate for you needs; no matter what comes our way. I cannot wait to see you all on campus again soon! ■

Abby Ehling, FY 2021 Staff Senate President

CONT'D ON PG. 2

IN THIS ISSUE

1 From the Presidents

Committee Updates

- 2 Legislative Affairs
- 2 Professional Development
- 3 Diversity & Inclusion
- 4 Personnel Affairs
- 5 Elections

PRESIDENT, CONT'D

Over the last decade, staff have individually and collectively faced a series of budgetary and societal challenges. We have all been directly impacted by the “doing more with less” approach, which has resulted in an ever-decreasing staff workforce, stretched thin by our duties and the duties of our former colleagues. We have and continue to experience societal divisions and inequities, and the past 12 months have seen this amplified by the pandemic.

We fully anticipate these challenges to continue through the next fiscal year and, as your elected representatives, Staff Senate will continue to represent and advocate for *all* university support staff and unclassified support staff at the Lawrence and Edwards campuses.

Our committees are hard at work drafting policies, providing professional development, and serving on workgroups with university leadership to better the lives of you, the staff. We are here to listen, support your concerns and advocate, and you can communicate with us directly through our staff senators or through our general email. You are not alone in your challenges, and we welcome the opportunity to advocate on your behalf. ■

Tim Spencer, FY 2022 Staff Senate President

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Legislative Affairs Committee is tasked with monitoring activities at the university, in the state government, and at KBOR that impact the staff experience at KU. We oversee changes to the Staff Senate Code and work with leadership to address matters that impact staff on the Lawrence and Edwards campuses.

We've been meeting on-line via Zoom or Teams on a monthly basis to review and discuss issues such as the inclement weather policy, additional tuition support, as well as revisions to the Staff Senate Code and the University Senate Code. We have productive conversations and take a team approach to problem-solving.

One of our largest accomplishments this past year was finalizing changes to the Staff Senate Code that create additional opportunities for Senators to participate in officer and chair positions, and to create a smooth transition each year as these positions turn over.

Over the last several years involvement in our Staff Senate committees has grown, and the need for additional leadership roles has now been formalized into chair-elect, treasurer-elect, and secretary-elect positions. This new structure mirrors the president and president-elect roles, essentially creating a “year in training” opportunity. These

changes have been submitted to the Provost for final approval and we hope to have them implemented for the April transition meeting.

It's been an unbelievable year and like everyone, we miss seeing our friends and co-workers. We hope your semester ends on a positive note and we cannot wait to see many of you on campus again in the near future. ■

Michelle Ginavan Hayes, Chair
mginavan@ku.edu

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

This past year has been difficult for all of us. The Professional Development Committee helped amend the Professional Development Pepsi Fund qualifications. This included expanding coverage to allow for online courses not offered at KU and are not considered degree seeking. In addition, the fund will become eligible for departments to apply for funds to help bring in a speaker to reach a broader audience. We hope to continue with this momentum to build and make next year even better for staff. ■

Kim Spencer, Co-Chair
kimspencer@ku.edu

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (D&I) COMMITTEE UPDATE

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Staff Senate D&I Committee has forged ahead in regard to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts in the midst of a global pandemic, continued racial unrest, and uncertain employment contingency. Despite this, the committee members are dedicated to making a difference to the underrepresented/marginalized groups on the KU campus and the communities in which they reside. We've briefly highlighted the amazing work the D&I ACTION Teams are doing with a DEI lens, focused on staff.

Over the past year, the Accountability ACTION Team created two objectives: 1. hold Staff Senate and the D&I Committee accountable for commitments they have made to diversity, equity, and inclusion work; and 2. hold University leadership accountable for institutional commitments made to DEI.

Research was conducted on the accountability work being done at peer institutions. Those findings will be used as a template to develop an accountability framework and will be included on the Staff Senate D&I webpage for fall of 2021. The ACTION Team is meeting with the Chairs for each Staff Senate committee to hear how they are incorporating D&I into their processes and initiatives. We will gather infor-

mation from each Chair about how they would like to report initiatives to the Accountability ACTION Team. Once we have established this routine within Staff Senate we will move forward with additional accountability efforts.

The Education ACTION Team merged with the "Unpacking Whiteness in the Workplace" ACTION Team in March. As separate teams they shared many members and the goals of furthering the education of the members of the Staff Senate Diversity & Inclusion Committee, Staff Senate members, and the wider university community regarding racism and white supremacy culture as well as the tools that are necessary to combat them.

Before the merge, this team collaborated to gather resources on racialized trauma, Black joy, and Black History Month shared via The Lens, the Staff Senate D&I Committee's newsletter. Members of the group are currently compiling resources on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) history in Lawrence. These resources will likely be shared in an upcoming issue of The Lens.

During the 2020-21 semester, the Listen and Respond ACTION Team endeavored to create more open lines of communication for feedback from staff to Staff

Senate regarding issues of diversity and inclusion by creating a feedback form accessible on the Staff Senate website. The team also researched alternate models for structuring our committee to center marginalized voices in agenda setting.

The Supervisor Accountability ACTION Team is currently providing a supportive role towards the Staff Fellows group. This year, their research project includes performance evaluations (i.e. 360 reviews, etc.). Part of that research includes conducting an internal focus group of KU employees this spring to evaluate current practices. The D&I committee offered to review those focus group questions and topics to ensure they are inclusive. This ACTION Team will pick up where the Staff Fellows concludes to start putting recommendations into ACTION.

The "Unpacking Whiteness in the Workplace" ACTION Team continued to host the "Unpacking Whiteness in the Workplace" workshop series, transitioning to an online environment for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Each semester, the team facilitated three 2-hour discussion sessions every other week for the span of about a month to cover

CONT'D ON PG. 2

PERSONNEL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Personnel Affairs committee is grateful for the remarkable lengths our Facilities Operations staff have gone to create a safe working and learning environment for the KU community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

To show appreciation, the Personnel Affairs created a proposal, that was funded by Staff Senate, to gift Lawrence and Edwards FO employees KU branded stocking caps. The caps were a small token of appreciation and gratitude. Thank you, Facilities Operations!

There was continued collaboration with Employee Relations on developing and enhancing resources for supervisors such as the New Employee Checklist for Supervisors and the Supervisor “Toolbox” that consists of key supervisory practices, key supervisory resources, and KU core competencies. The goal is to have resources finalized by the end of the academic year.

Committee members are currently reviewing winter break/holiday break policies and practices at neighboring and peer institutions and how those policies are similar and/or different to what is currently in place at KU.

The Personnel Affairs Committee looks forward to cross-committee and cross-campus collaboration as we aim to enhance the employee experience.

Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, recommendations, or want to get involved in the committee. ■

Leslie Wilson, Chair
lesliewilson@ku.edu



Members of Facilities Operations sport their new Jayhawk stocking caps. *Photo: Leslie Wilson*

D&I, CONT'D

the topics usually included in the in-person sessions. In advance of the live discussions, the group collaborated to create a SharePoint site with an introductory page and pages with materials for each of the three workshop sessions. The pages for each session include lesson objectives, introductions of terms, links to pertinent articles, educational videos, and worksheets that guide participants through the concepts discussed. Participants were asked to review the materials on the SharePoint site in advance of each session to be prepared for small group discussions held via Zoom breakout rooms. There was an average of 30-40 attendees per workshop over the course of the two semesters.

If you are interested in learning more about the Staff Senate D&I Committee and how to get involved, please contact either co-chair. ■

Michelle Wilson, Co-Chair
michellewilson@ku.edu
Tiphani Dixon, Co-Chair
dixonty@ku.edu

WAYS TO CONNECT WITH KU STAFF SENATE

- [facebook.com/groups/kustaffsenate](https://www.facebook.com/groups/kustaffsenate)
- twitter.com/kustaffsenate

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

UPDATE

We just finished an election and are in the middle of confirming the results. Thank you to the governance office for coordinating, specifically Ellen Silker.

Staff Senate provides ways to serve on or lead committees focused on specific issues. This year, we are moving away from the chair/co-chair model and instead doing “chair-elect” positions similar to president-elect. The chair-elect will work to learn the new position under the chair for one year, and then assume the role of the chair. Special thanks to Michelle Ginavan Hayes for codifying this change, and Rick Evanhoe for helping think through how to conduct elections through Zoom.

If you are interested in serving in this way, but would like more information, reach out to staff-senate@ku.edu. ■

Matt Deakyne, Chair
mdeakyne@ku.edu

UPCOMING VACANCIES

- Secretary & Secretary Elect
- Treasurer & Treasurer Elect
- Public Relations Chair Elect
- Legislative Affairs Chair Elect
- Elections Chair Elect
- Professional Development Chair Elect
- Diversity and Inclusion Chair Elect

IMPORTANT DATES

- April 1
Election results confirmed; new senators contacted
- April 14
Transition meeting of all senators

This newsletter was assembled by the KU Staff Senate Public Relations Committee:

Co-Chairs Teri Chambers & Mary Murphy; Kelly Banks, Kindra Bartz, Brain Bouton, Kisha Cranston, Margaret Hair, Lindsay Jorgenson, Nicole Reiz, Angela Robb, Justin Runge