



Staff Council

Date: December 31, 2024
From: GW Staff Council President, Bridget Schwartz
To All University Staff
Subject: 2023-2024 Staff Council Almanac

Mission

Staff Council's mission is to serve the interests and needs of the GW staff, which are not covered by the collective bargaining agreement, pertaining to their daily activities and work conditions as they strive to support the university's goal of providing quality education. Toward this effort, the Staff Council promotes understanding and cooperation by facilitating communication among campus constituencies and by serving as an advocate for non-executive staff who are not covered by collective bargaining agreements on issues that affect them. In our efforts to enhance the quality of the GW work environment, the Staff Council provides leadership and support to work together with all GW staff, faculty, students, and alumni, to enrich community spirit.

Goals

- To participate, assist, and advise in decision-making processes that affect our constituents.
- To provide a forum for hearing and reviewing the concerns and interests of our constituents.
- To provide feedback to the administration regarding proposed actions, programs, policies, and procedures that will affect our constituents.
- To be a voice for the staff by initiating suggestions to improve university staff relations and bring ideas that originate from within the staff to the attention of the administration.
- To identify staff members to serve as appointees on university, Human Resources committees, Benefits Advisory Committee, and Presidential Searches.
- To act intentionally to promote GW's educational community as an efficient, fulfilling, and attractive environment for employment.
- To facilitate and collaborate on programming, development opportunities, and to allow for spaces to build a strong staff community and advancement.

Successes and Overview of Key Term Accomplishments

Board and Leadership Visibility

The Council has made significant strides in ensuring that staff voices are represented at the highest levels of university leadership. We have pushed for greater transparency and engagement with GW's Board of Trustees, as well as regular meetings with key university leaders. These efforts have provided staff members with a direct channel to share concerns, propose solutions, and stay informed about important university decisions. Guest speakers from University leadership at GW Staff Council meetings were as follows:

- Ellen Granberg, University President
- Sabrina Minor, Vice President of Human Resources and Chief People Officer
- Baxter Goodly, Vice President for Safety and Operations
- Bruno Fernandes Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer
- Jay Goff, Vice Provost for Enrollment and Student Success
- Anna Vakulick, Deputy CIO
- Anna de Lapparent, Director of Enterprise Applications
- Diane Conners, Director of Talent Acquisition
- Jennifer Lopez, Associate Vice President of Total Rewards
- Glenna Bennett, Director of Payroll Services
- Annie Hess, Director of Compensation
- Simran Kaur-Colber, Director of the Center for Interfaith and Spiritual Life
- Arielle Geismar and Ethan Fitzgerald, Student Government Association Presidents
- Ilana Feldman, Chair of the Faculty Senate
- Aaron Howell, Senior Compliance Associate
- Dorinda Tucker, Associate Vice President and Data Privacy Officer
- GW Communications & Marketing: Nadya Rose, Manager, Mobile and Web Services; Hanna McCathren, Digital Transformation Specialist; Natasha Mojica, Front End Web Developer; Olivia Burke, Web Lead, Administrative Units; Tracy Helbert, Web Lead, Administrative Units
- James Tatte, former Chief of Police

The Staff Council was also invited to join the University Leadership Council, represent staff at President Granberg's inauguration as a speaker and flag bearers, select staff representatives for the Campus Safety Advisory Committee, and have representatives on Faculty Senate committees, Student Government Association groups, and the Human Resource Benefit Advisory Committee.

Further, the Staff Council Executive members were invited to a reception with members of the Board of Directors, President Granberg, Provost Bracey, CFO Bruno Fernandes, and VP of HR Sabrina Minor. A significant accomplishment was getting a voice with the Board of Trustees. To that end the Staff Council President now meets with the Chair of the Board of Trustees prior to presenting at the Board of Trustees Meetings.

Micro-Surveys

In the 2023-2024 term, the Staff Council undertook several micro-surveys to gain insights into staff challenges at GW, which were instrumental in shaping our understanding of the workplace environment. The surveys revealed significant issues such as burnout, cost of living, and a lack of job satisfaction, with over half of respondents reporting feelings of exhaustion after work. This highlights the pressing need for enhanced workplace support and resources.

Additionally, many staff members indicated that their teams were understaffed, signaling a critical area for management intervention. Commute concerns emerged as another key theme, with lengthy travel times and rising transportation costs prompting requests for more flexible work options. The financial strain faced by staff was evident, as a substantial number reported relying on secondary jobs to meet living expenses. Moreover, nearly half of respondents had not utilized the tuition remission benefit, primarily due to time constraints and tax implications.

The quality and quantity of comments received indicate a growing trust in the Council, as staff felt increasingly comfortable sharing their experiences and concerns. These survey results will inform our discussions with the Board of Trustees, providing valuable insights to effectively address staff needs moving forward.

In summary, the surveys not only served as a tool for advocacy but also underscored the importance of listening to staff voices, paving the way for positive changes and enhanced well-being within the GW community. Looking ahead, it is essential that we continue to engage with staff feedback and prioritize initiatives that support their needs and aspirations. Survey results are linked below:

- [Merit and Performance Review Survey Results](#)
- [The State of Staff 2023-2024 Survey Results](#)
- [Staff Paid Time Off Survey Results](#)

Resolutions Passed

The GW Staff Council has made significant strides in its inaugural term, culminating in the passage of several key resolutions aimed at enhancing the staff experience:

- [**Resolution to Express Gratitude to Former President Mark Wrighton and Welcome President Ellen M. Granberg**](#): This resolution highlighted our appreciation for Dr. Wrighton's leadership and emphasized our commitment to working closely with President Granberg to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for staff.
- [**Resolution to Support Wage Adjustments for Staff and Permanent Decoupling of Annual Wage Increases from Performance**](#): This resolution addressed urgent concerns regarding wage stagnation and advocated for a one-time salary increase, standardized annual raises, and a comprehensive review of staff wages to align with the cost of living.

- **[Resolution to Support the Permanent Adoption of the GW Remote and Hybrid Policy](#)**: This resolution underscored the importance of remote work as a valuable tool for staff retention, recruitment, and morale, advocating for the continuation of flexible work arrangements.
- **[Resolution to Amend Staff Council Bylaws](#)**: This resolution modified the elected Staff Council term to run on a calendar year instead of a fiscal year. In recognition that for many staff members, the busiest times of the year are in preparation for and during the early fall semester. The change will also allow for a voting period that does not coincide with popular periods of annual leave in the summer. Further, the Communications Committee was removed as a standing committee, thus removing the Chair of the Communications Committee position as an appointed position and replacing the position with an elected Correspondence and Engagement Secretary.

In addition to these resolutions, the Council has actively advocated for increased visibility among board and university leadership. Our engagement has led to meaningful discussions around the recent merit changes, showcasing our influence in shaping policies that directly impact staff.

Influence on Merit Pay Changes

Through surveys, data collection, and open discussions, the GW Staff Council advocated for changes to merit pay policies. By presenting the results of our surveys, where a significant percentage of staff expressed dissatisfaction with the existing merit and compensation practices, the Council successfully advocated for more equitable adjustments to the merit-based salary increase process. This year, the staff merit pool was increased by one percent, an adjustment that was well received by staff.

Advocate for December 23rd as a Paid Holiday

Based on comments received in the micro-surveys, we saw a pattern where staff reported that it is often difficult to disconnect from work while on leave. As such, the GW Staff Council advocated for the university to add December 23rd as a paid holiday to give staff a full week to plan for the holidays, travel, and take much-needed time off.

Connecting and Celebrating Staff

As a voice for GW staff it was important to create multiple touch points and be accessible to staff. To this end, we created a feedback form for staff to share their concerns, distributed a monthly newsletter, and offered monthly Staff Spotlights and Community Connections (department spotlights). The Staff Council was also present at significant university events like the Proud to be GW Festival, New Employee Lunches, Career Milestones, and university strategic planning listening sessions. The council also created an In Memoriam page on our website to honor staff members who have passed away.

Challenges and Opportunities Encountered

Despite our successes, the Council faced several challenges during our inaugural term. One significant hurdle was the turnover of representatives, which made it difficult to maintain consistent engagement across committees. However, this experience taught us valuable lessons in fostering participation and collaboration.

Communication from leadership has been another ongoing challenge. While there have been strides in transparency—especially regarding the merit increase and responses to our survey reports—there is still work to be done to ensure staff voices are consistently heard and acknowledged.

Due to years of distrust and failed advocacy for a staff representative body, building and retaining staff trust proved to be a complex task as well. Yet, we saw a positive shift following increased meaningful feedback from our micro survey comments, indicating that staff feel more comfortable sharing their concerns and suggestions. We also saw a steady increase in the number of staff subscribing to our newsletter and strong attendance at the council meetings. This demonstrates the potential for growth in our communication efforts and reinforces our commitment to representing staff effectively.

Lastly, maintaining websites, communication avenues, and meetings without dedicated administrative support was challenging. Staff time is often already stretched thin due to continuing issues with turnover and understaffing, and it is difficult for staff to take on additional responsibilities outside of their positions. We will continue to advocate for a paid student position but are immensely grateful for all the staff who volunteered their time to ensure the success of the Staff Council.

Staff Council Voting Members

Executive Leadership

The 2023-2024 GW Staff Council has seen several changes and shifted course multiple times throughout the year due to the challenges and changes within the University members. The 2023-2024 Executive Officers at the end of the 2024 term include:

- Bridget Schwartz, President
- Kim Fulmer, Vice President
- Amanda Kohn, Correspondence & Engagement Secretary (Chair of Communications Committee July 2023-February 2024)
- Andrea Willis Johnson, Historian
- Mindy Galván, Parliamentarian
- Raymond Rozario, Treasurer
- Alexandra Washington, Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Chair
- Amy-Leah Joaquim, Service Committee Chair
- Nicole Mintz, Staff Experience Committee Chair
- Vacant Position, Staff Development and Recognition Committee Chair

School and Division Representatives

- Andre Culbreath, Columbian College Representative
- Caroline Kemp, Division of Student Affairs Representative
- Christina Fenton, Milken Institute School of Public Health Representative
- Courtney Boaz, Law School Representative
- Edward McKoy, Office of the Vice President of Research and Institutes Representative
- Ian Jenney, Office of the President, Deputy Provost and Provost Immediate, Faculty Affairs, OGC, and ODECE Representative
- Imomotimi "Timmy" Imomotebegha, Milken Institute School of Public Health Representative
- Jacquelyne Pryor, School of Medicine and Health Sciences Representative
- Jen O'Quinn, VP of Finance and Treasurer, VP Financial Planning and Operations, and Controller Representative
- Jodi Friedman, Safety and Operations Representative
- Jonathan Ragone, School of Engineering and Applied Science Representative
- Madison Thurston, Graduate School of Education and Human Development Representative
- Margaret Wagner, Safety and Operations Representative
- Michael Kern, Information Technology Representative
- Paul Regis, School of Business Representative
- Sarah Squire, Elliott School of International Affairs Representative
- Sharon Testor, Enrollment and Student Success Representative
- Shauntae Trammell, Information Technology Representative
- Shawn Bayrd, School of Nursing & College of Professional Students Representative
- Stephanie Johnson, Human Resources Management and Development Representative
- Stephen McNamara, Athletics and Recreation Representative
- Tara Y. Davis, School of Medicine and Health Sciences Representative
- Terry Carter, Communications and Marketing
- Tricia Greenstein, Libraries & Academic Innovation, GW Museums Representative
- Vacant Position, Development, and Alumni Relations Representative

Council Members Who Stepped Down Before End of Term

- Aida Cavalic, School of Engineering and Applied Science Representative Representative
- Andrea Kovachy, Development and Alumni Relations Representative
- Heather Richards, School of Medicine and Health Sciences Representative
- Kelly Whittier, Milken Institute School of Public Health Representative
- Leslie Ward, Graduate School of Education and Human Development Representative
- Melanie Trask, School of Medicine and Health Sciences Representative
- Michelle Fargher, Staff Development and Recognition Committee Chair
- William Hankel, Human Resources Management and Development Representative

Andrea Willis-Johnson, Historian
Brigette Kamsler (file)