

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

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## Staff Council Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2023 | Wednesday | 1:00pm | ONLINE (Zoom)

Participants: Professional Staff of University of Hartford

**Welcome: Lisa Read, Staff Council Chair**

### I. Consent Agenda

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- The consent agenda was voted on and approved as written.

### II. Guest Speakers: Greg Woodward and Katherine Black

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Before beginning Lisa thanked President Woodward for his support of Staff Council and wished him a happy retirement.

#### President Woodward:

- Sad to be moving on, but this was my choice and my choice alone.
- Proud of what we've done, entering the next chapter – time for a fresh start, blank slate
- Down 1,000 students, which is about 23% of our enrollment
- After the 2 pandemic classes get through, hope to have a budget in place that's strong. We will get through this with our heads held high.
- Have to make some tough choices for a couple of years.
- Want to have a conversation and discussion today. Want to hear from you.
- Budget changes will vary depending on the various factors in and not in our control.
- This always is going to be a little dicey, we are a non-profit, and it's been this way for 63 years; we are still here.

#### Questions:

1. Plans for changing some staff to 11 months?

Greg: Some might actually prefer this, possibly stepping forward because they want this – budget savings would just be gravy. They won't insist on it for anyone.

OK to be creative with your supervisor – might take different parts of job off at different times, like a 4-day week.

2. Has the adjunct rate changed?

Katherine: Rate has gone up since pandemic. Problem is too many low-enrolled courses. Will have Deans and chairs look at curriculum, number of sections, fewer electives, some offered every other year. Way out of whack with our efficiency here.

Greg: There is some redundancies of course offerings, major requirements. This could amount to almost \$2 million in savings.

3. Status of staff salary adjustments and will administrators be included?

Greg: We are doing the equity adjustment for staff later this spring - those not at reasonable minimums.

Other levers to consider:

Move toward our more common industry standards in retirement contributions and health benefits. Is there a place and time when we could move closer to the norm?

Cuts across all divisions – 4%

Greg wonders: Slightly lower retirement benefits v 2% salary increment increase – which one choose? Faculty say keep retirement. What does staff think?

Erica Schermerhorn Light – Will retirement benefits lower for all, even new people?

Katherine: yes

Greg – We have explored a tiered benefit system depending on salary range. And are looking at those working with contracts.

Also, looked at considerate reduction in administrative raises.

Anonymous comment – Salaries are below standard, but the retirement benefits are above so helps that; if cut retirement benefits, we will be below the norm for both.

Katherine – The retirement cut would take us to the norm, not below.

Marsha Gaulin – If you bring it down to 7%, it's never going down again.

Someone suggested a survey to all employees

Would be helpful to see statistics of low earners while maintaining the 9% for everyone – how to protect the low earners

Jen Conley – industry standard 7% retirement, but doesn't effect your take home pay

Greg – subtlety of tax breaks, one would take the raise and put some in retirement if want

Anonymous Comment: Week to week is tough for those making less, so 2% would be a hardship.

Greg – insurance costs go up every year. So if salary low, need to help certain people.

4. Is there a retirement package being offered for this spring?

Greg – some legal considerations, but would probably bring a loss, so would be crazy.

5. If made change, would 2% raise be guaranteed every year or just once?

Greg – It would be impossible to guarantee that.

6. Updates from administration has created an environment of uncertainty. When will we see some execution of these plans?

Katherine: We are trying to do the very best we can, seeking lots of input, it takes time.

Board will vote in May. We will be putting in front of them a proposal of how we are going to balance the budget.

These are difficult decisions we don't want to make lightly, but want to keep the community apprised.

Greg – can be more relaxed when know slightly more to the details. On the other hand, when you see all the ideas going by it does create angst. Even if we adopted every single one it would not be pleasant, but would not be as painful as people are imagining.

Trying to maintain a balance between keeping informed without trying to stir up a lot of anxiety.

7. Who will continue your vision?

Greg – What the board approves in May will have to be followed through with and I would hope the next person would see it through. There will be an Interim president for a period of time since it's a big process to hire a new president. Interim person won't have time to make a new plan anyway.

8. Status of open administrative positions – treasurer and comptroller?

Greg – We are working on that. Bjorn Burke is back, along with couple other people hired. Don't want to rush it. All that is being sorted out. Figuring out what combination is needed.

9. Did the board approve some of the decisions before the pandemic, and if so, why are they pressuring us to balance the budget?

Greg – The board oversees the budget and there's a line between that and managing. We made a lot of decisions during the pandemic. Bonds carry requirements for financial stability. I feel like we are in good place now. Board acting prudently but don't see them backing off on their expectations.

Happy to come back any time to give more updates.

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### **III. Reports**

#### **Benefits Task Force. Traci Giovinazzo and Desirée Kleykamp**

We are looking very closely at all of our medical options and specifically our premium tiers to determine if there is a better breakdown/tiering structure.

#### **DEI Task Force. Anthony Ferello**

No report.

#### **Environmental and Sustainability Committee. Sandra Rampertab**

The ESV committee is brainstorming Earth Day awareness activities for 20 April. Marketing and Communications will be involved in developing a social media platform for the activities. There will be tables with displays from (Dining, Facilities, ResLife), to demonstrate ways in which they are currently recycling. The Aramark representative is talking with Starbucks to provide possible prizes for students who partake in the activities. This event is still in the stages of development.

#### **Faculty Senate Delegate to Staff Council**

Welcome Karen Breda!

#### **Nominating Committee. John Strand**

Nominations are complete and the ballot is now open. Voting will run until March 17. Find the ballot here: <https://forms.office.com/r/tgeLTSR352>.

#### **RPPC. Ben Ide and Laura D'Angelo-Gohn**

The budget has been updated to reflect a slightly larger deficit than anticipated, due to miscalculations in housing revenue projections. The list of potential resolutions proposed at the Feb. 13 Town Hall meeting were discussed again with RPPC. No definitive decisions were made, but it was made clear that employees will need clear, concise and consistent communication from the Administration, and that the faculty and staff should not be considered two separate entities, but should work together as a cohesive group of University employees to resolve this deficit. Katherine Black is going to work on assigning estimated budget savings for each of the options on the list, as well as a predicted time frame when the University would see those budget savings. The assumption is that the University will explore options that would save UHart the most money in the shortest amount of time.

#### **Staff Council E-Board. Lisa Read**

The E-Board will be meeting with the final candidates for Provost, and we want to hear from you first! What is important to you in our next Provost? What questions should we ask the candidates? Email your ideas to [staff@hartford.edu](mailto:staff@hartford.edu) or use our anonymous form: <https://forms.office.com/r/vDPr9rPR23>.

#### **IV. Announcements**

##### **Staff and Faculty Lunch Days**

All staff and faculty are invited to share lunch together in the Commons private dining room Friday, March 10 and Friday, April 7, noon-2pm each day. Bring a friend and meet your colleagues from other departments too!

##### **Spring Kickball Game**

The students vs. faculty and staff kickball game will be held on the GSU lawn, Friday, April 21st, noon-2pm; and the rain date is Friday, April 28th, noon-2pm. We want plenty of staff so we have a full team to battle the students! Sign up to play by emailing [stconduct@hartford.edu](mailto:stconduct@hartford.edu).

##### **Office of Development and Alumni Affairs. Erica Schermerhorn Light**

The Day of Giving will be March 29. There are various events taking place, including the S'Mores event at Poe firepit.

##### **Hartford Art School. Marsha Gaulin**

On view now at the Hartford Art School:

Feb. 23 – March 25: Whitney Exhibition- Chiraag Bhakta: Designing the Dream State in Joseloff Gallery

Feb. 23 – March 25: Koopman Exhibition- Genevieve de Leon: To Order the Days in Silpe Gallery

##### **CETA. Allison Poulin**

CETA has hired a new Office Coordinator. Her name is Tracy Ryan and she started February 6th. We are so happy to have her!

##### **GSU. Dina Morris**

Please support LEAD student, Benie Kwarteng '23, as she collects supplies for a school in Ghana, Africa. Backpacks, pens, crayons, colored pencils, notebooks, water bottles, and other supplies for all ages are welcome. Feel free to leave your donation in The Women's Advancement Initiative Office (GSU 327) or in bins throughout campus marked "Develop Africa."

Monetary donations through Venmo are also appreciated. The drive will run until May 1. Flyer is attached at the end of this document.