

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

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## Staff Council Annual Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2022 | Wednesday | 1:00pm | ONLINE (Zoom)

Participants: Professional Staff of University of Hartford

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

### **March 9, 2022 - General Meeting Minutes**

- Discussion and approval of the minutes from previous general meeting
  - Rachel Yacouby voted to approve the Minutes as written; Cindy Oppenheimer seconded this motion
  - Approved with 50% votes in favor and 4 abstentions

### **Officer Reports**

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#### **Chair, Lisa Wollenberg**

- Lisa shared Chair's Annual Report (see attached)

#### **Vice Chair, Jessica Brice**

- Jessica introduced herself and encouraged members to reach out with any concerns

#### **Secretary, (report by Lisa Wollenberg)**

- Minutes for each of the ten Staff Council meetings held between May 2021 and March 2022 have been approved at each subsequent meeting.
- The Executive Board meeting minutes from May through December 2021 have been approved, except those for our July meeting, which were lost. Due to officer turnover, official minutes were not kept January through March 2022.
- Effective today, Laura Corey has stepped into the vacant Secretary position, and will serve in the role until April 2023, the end of the current term.

#### **Treasurer, Linda Zigmont**

- The beginning balance at the start of FY22 was \$1,422.98. There have been no expenditures this year – the balance as of today is \$1,422.98. As Linda is retiring this summer, Meaghan Murphy-Rennie has stepped into the Treasurer position effective immediately, and will serve in the role until the end of the current term in April 2023.

#### **Communications Director, Rachel Yacouby**

- Rachel looks forward to getting information out effectively, refining how we communicate
- Encouraged members to reach out to her at staff council email.

### **Committee Reports**

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#### **Fundraising Committee, Jessica Brice, Chair**

- Jessica encouraged members to reach out if interested in joining this committee.

### **Hospitality Committee, Rachel Yacouby, Chair**

- Rachel reported that committee has not met yet, and to reach out if interested in joining.
- They hope to continue to assist with the Outstanding Staff Member award as well as welcome new staff who begin at the University of Hartford.

### **Nominating Committee, Ben Ide, Chair (Lisa reporting)**

- The Nominating Committee is now collecting nominations for Staff Council delegate and committee member positions. These include seats on the Resources Priorities and Planning Committee and Benefits Taskforce, a delegate position to Faculty Senate, and committee membership for Hospitality, Fundraising, and Ways & Means. Please consider volunteering or nominating other staff for these important positions. The nominating form is open for two weeks, from today, April 13 through Wednesday, April 27: <https://forms.office.com/r/frPDYceD6f>
- Nominations submitted previously do not need to be resubmitted.

### **Ways and Means Committee, Ben Ide, Chair (Lisa reporting)**

- After a long hiatus, the Ways & Means committee is back! It's still early, but we have plans to address action items from the large review of the Constitution and Bylaws during the transition from Staff Association to Staff Council, identify places where better defined terminology is needed, and review recommendations from the NECHE review.
- Rachel Yacouby encouraged newer staff to join this committee to be involved in molding how we move forward.

## **Delegate Reports**

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### **Benefits Taskforce: Cindy Oppenheimer/Desirée Kleykamp**

BTF Overview, 2021-2022

- Annual Review of benefits. No major change to rate, coverage or carrier for medical
- Change of disability carrier effective April, 2022
- CT paid leave started effective 1/1/2022. HRD and disability carrier have been working to integrate without too much disruption to employees
- COVID and keeping up with federal regulations changes and impact on claims.
- Changed to bereavement policy for immediate family from 3 days to 5 days
- Doctoral Studies Added to Tuition Remission Benefit
- Return of Snow Days

The Benefits Task Force did not meet in March.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force: Desirée Kleykamp**

- Be aware of upcoming programs for APIDA Heritage Month:  
“Belonging and Not: Invisible Asian Americans and the Bamboo Ceiling” (April 13)  
“Creating Visibility and Belonging for the APIDA Community: A Panel Discussion” (April 21)
- Flyers distributed via email and much more happening which can be found on website.

### **Resource Planning & Priorities Committee (RPPC): (Laura D’Angelo-Gohn/Ben Ide)**

- The meeting was cancelled this month because, although the Board of Regents supports the broad outlines of the budget, some discussion still needs to take place to approve the specifics. There is some good news, though. Despite the expected drop in spring enrollment numbers, retention from fall to spring held right at the estimated 93% community.

#### **Faculty Senate: Rachel Yacouby**

- Fred S and Greg attended recent Faculty Senate meeting and was nice to hear what they had to say.
- Contact Rachel with any issues you'd like to bring to their attention at next meeting.

#### **Resource Planning and Priorities Committee: Ben Ide and Laura D'Angelo-Gohn** (Lisa reporting)

The Resource Planning & Priorities Committee (RPPC) has met several times over the past year and covered the following topics/areas:

- Discussed points of the UHart Start plan and used this plan as a guide to prioritize budgetary areas
- Focusing on recruitment and retention as a priority, determine which parts of UHart Start align most with those areas.
- Discussed Financial Sustainability Plan (part of UHart Start) that was presented to the Board of Regents in February 2022
- Over the next 1-3 years, University has developed a plan for enhancement of campus operations, in order to invest in revenue growth, added value, and implement cost-saving options:
  - o Create a dedicated Office of Online Learning (fastest and most consistent area of revenue and enrollment growth at the University)
  - o Grow CSS to elevate retention and persistence to graduation
  - o Increase annual gain by approximately \$10 million with Athletics transitioning from Division I to Division III
  - o Residential improvements will be made (Village apartments, improve Park River, Quads, etc.)
  - o Invest in resources for mental and behavioral health, as well as DEIJ initiatives
  - o Move all recreation and club sports to Athletics for a holistic approach to campus-wide wellness/recreation programs and facilities
  - o Devote significant funds to compensation improvement to increase overall employee retention
  - o Partner with Aramark for campus physical maintenance and facility management
  - o Seek efficiency in our University program portfolio, making data-informed decisions balancing support for mission with revenue generation and enrollment.

Our last RPPC meeting was Thursday, April 7th – We discussed projected budgets over the next few fiscal years.

#### **Community Representative Reports**

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##### **CETA, Allison Poulin**

Susan Aliberti is CETA's new Manager of Student Services and Evaluation. She began her career at the University in July 1996 as the Coordinator of Student Services in ENHP. She was promoted to the Academic Advisor & Evaluator for The Hartt School (August 1998 - December 2004). Susan then became an adjunct writing faculty in A&S Department of English and Modern Languages in Fall 2003 and continued teaching part-time through December 2021. CETA is so happy to have her on board now and part of our team! Welcome Susan!

##### **Hartford Art School, Marsha Gaulin**

Hartford Art School Senior Thesis Shows: Marsha reminded members that the art students love it when people from the university come see their work.

**Senior Thesis Exhibit #1 – April 2-12**

- Illustration – Joseloff Gallery
- Integrated Media Arts – Silpe Gallery
- Reception – Saturday, April 2 – 5-7 p.m. – Koopman Commons

**Senior Thesis Exhibit #2 – April 16-26**

- Printmaking & Painting – Joseloff Gallery
- Photography – Silpe Gallery 4
- Reception – Saturday, April 23 – 5-7 p.m. – Koopman Commons

**Senior Thesis Exhibit #3 – April 30 – May 10**

- Design – Joseloff Gallery
- Ceramics – Silpe Gallery
- Reception – Saturday, April 30 – 5-7 p.m. – Koopman Commons

- Marsha reminded members that the art students love it when people from the university come see their work.
- A new gallery director will be starting at the end of May. Announcement to come.

## **Old Business**

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### **Open Positions**

The following Staff Council positions are currently open: Grievance Officer, and Community Reps for Athletics, Finance and Administrative Services, Gengras, Hillyer, the Libraries, and Exempt Member at Large. Contact [staff@hartford.edu](mailto:staff@hartford.edu) to volunteer yourself or nominate a colleague, or if you have questions about the positions.

## **New Business**

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### **Community Representative turnover**

Laurie Fasciano has resigned as the Rep for Hillyer. Ann Brown has started a new position in the Provost's Office, so Clarissa Terra is taking over as the Rep for Residential Life. Victoria Sandoval has left the university, and Ally Denno is taking her place as Rep for Institutional Advancement, which is changing its name to Development & Alumni Affairs. Meaghan Murphy-Rennie is taking over as Treasurer, so is no longer the Rep for Gengras Student Union. Laura Corey has taken the role of Secretary, so is no longer the Rep for the Libraries building.

### **University mask policy**

Guidance for staff:

Lisa reached out to Jen Conley and Katie Kitchens (COVID Steering Committee) about the new mask policy, seeking guidance and clarification for staff. Here is the additional guidance so far:

- Eating is no longer limited to dining facilities. Food is now allowed in all areas where masks are optional.

- For employees whose duties include working face-to-face with students, faculty, etc., it is suggested they ask the question “Would you like me to put my mask on?” especially if the other person is wearing their own mask.
- If an employee is uncomfortable with their work situation due to the new mask policy and is seeking an alternate arrangement, they may need an official accommodation. Accommodations are evaluated under the ADA guidelines and an interactive dialogue between the employee and HRD is completed followed by an evaluation of reasonable accommodations. Work from home permanently may not be a reasonable accommodation based on the employee’s role/duties – we would work with the employee and department to determine what we could offer. Another option is to explore the feasibility of a hybrid remote work option, if this works for the department. This would fall under the Flex/Remote Work Schedule Option. Again, it may not work for every employee or department, but is worth exploring.
- The Committee will be addressing questions for specific shared-office situations in the next few weeks. For now, the recommendation is to follow the guidance as outlined, and if someone is not comfortable they may continue to wear a mask. If that person is wearing a mask due to personal health reasons, it is advised to be cautious in discussions—disclosure of an individual’s health status may not be shared/compromised, as this is confidential.

#### Questions raised:

For the following 3 questions, Lisa will ask HR:

- What will the policy be for end of the year ceremonies/receptions?
- Are guests subjected to same policies as staff?
- Are masks required for unvaccinated people?

Lisa did confirm that unvaccinated people are allowed on campus if have exemption, of which there is a small number.

#### Discussion: Meeting Format and Procedures

- Consent agenda for reports and approval of minutes?
  - Lisa explained that a consent agenda is for items that typically don’t require discussion such as appointments and reports. At the beginning of a meeting members would approve the entire consent agenda with one vote. Then would not need to go over each individual report. This would leave more time for guest speakers and questions.
  - Rachel added that there would still be the opportunity to discuss anything on the consent agenda, but the potential extra time could lend itself to more robust discussion.

#### Reactions in Chat:

- From Jillian Cote: Sounds reasonable to me.
- From Janina Johnkoski: It is a big time saver, time efficiency.

Lisa advised members to email anyone on the board if they think of anything else about this topic.

#### • Recording Meetings?

- Rachel pointed out that Faculty Senate records their meetings.

#### Reactions in Chat:

- From Jillian Cote: My vote would be yes. I think recordings provide access.
- From Bevin Rainwater: My vote is yes – just make sure they are transferred to Ensemble or OneDrive to not take up Zoom storage. You can create a SharePoint site for Staff Council. Ensemble auto-captions and anything we go to will have auto-captions. I am helping Fac Senate transfer to SharePoint.

Lisa encouraged members to contact board after meeting with any other thoughts. She is thinking if we record meetings will make them available for a certain amount of time.

- Move meetings to a hybrid format?

- Lisa pointed out that attendance at meetings has improved since going remote, but some miss the in-person connections.

Reactions in Chat:

- From Bevin: I like the online format, makes it easy to jump in personally – so busy.
- From Tracy Rider: As a new member of the community, I would welcome the chance to meet people F2F in a COVID safe location!
- From Taylor St. Pierre: We have done a few for Reference meetings (3 or 4 in person, 1 or 2 video); Once we figured out a few technical issues, they went well; Small group, so take with a grain of salt!
- From Meghan McDonald: I really appreciate the Zoom meetings since I am located off campus and with the price of fuel being high, this is more accessible for me.
- From Marsha Gaulin: We have had problems with audio quality, particularly with ensemble.
- Several comments regarding using a mic.
- From Dina Morris: A mix of in-person quarterly and all other virtual. You can still record guest speakers in person and share the recording.

- May Meeting – Greg Woodward and Jen Conley, to discuss staff salary increases

Lisa asked members to “please, please, please” come to this meeting. Greg and Jen really want staff feedback. They will take questions ahead of time and during. Lisa added that it’s important to make sure your community knows and brings their feedback.

Bevin suggested giving staff a survey before the meeting. They can choose to be anonymous or not.

Nothing about the different ideas for staff raises has been posted yet. (Don’t know who said this, which was answer to Taylor S’s question.)

Meaghan Murphy-Rennie reminded all in Chat: Kickball – April 29.

## Upcoming Staff Council Meetings

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Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at 1pm. Upcoming dates:

May 11, 2022. Guests: Greg Woodward and Jen Conley

June 8, 2022. Guests: Christine Grant and Jane Horvath

July 13, 2022

August 10, 2022

September 14, 2022

October 12, 2022

## **Chair's Annual Report to the University of Hartford Staff Council**

April 13, 2022

This has been an eventful year for University staff. As we made our way through another year of challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff seemed to work harder than ever to support faculty, students, and each other. Through it all, the Staff Council has remained an agent for change and a channel for communication and connection between staff members and the wider university community.

### **Officers, Representatives, and Delegates**

Due to complications related to the pandemic, officer elections were delayed by one month. New officers were installed at the Staff Council meeting on May 12, 2021:

- Chair: Kate Darcy Hohenthal
- Vice Chair: Lisa Wollenberg
- Secretary: Laura D'Angelo-Gohn
- Treasurer: Linda Zigmont
- Communications Director: Rachel Yacouby
- At-Large Community Representatives for Non-Exempt Employees:
  - o Cindy Oppenheimer
  - o Bettina Viereck
- At-Large Community Representatives for Exempt Employees:
  - o Jillian Cote

After some turnover, the Board officers serving as of April 13, 2022 are:

- Chair: Lisa Wollenberg
- Vice Chair: Jessica Brice
- Secretary: Laura Corey
- Treasurer: Meaghan Murphy-Rennie
- Communications Director: Rachel Yacouby

Over the course of this year, there has been a 40% increase in staff members serving official roles in Staff Council. We thank all members for their commitment to fellow staff and their willingness to serve.

### **Monthly Meetings**

All Staff Council meetings were held on Zoom this year. We began virtual meetings in April 2020 to accommodate pandemic restrictions, and we have found that attendance and participation have increased significantly since moving to virtual meetings. It is now common for 50-80 staff members to attend any given meeting, compared to only 20-30 attendees at in-person meetings before the pandemic. The virtual format is more accessible to staff working from home or those who are not able to leave their 2 departments for in-person meetings, and we plan to continue with virtual and/or hybrid meetings moving forward.

Guest speakers continue to attend meetings in order to provide updates and answer questions on university issues and initiatives. Speakers this year came from all areas of the university and include Gregory Woodward, Jen Conley, Mark Boxer, Katie Kitchens, Molly Polk, R.J. McGivney, Christine Grant, Jane Horvath, Lynn Thibodeau, Sharon Beverly, Jessica Nicklin, Lisa Langsner, and Jeffrey Findlay. We thank all our guests for keeping open communication with staff in this way.

Meetings also continue to serve as an important communication tool for Officers, Community Representatives, and Delegates. Through regular reports and announcements, staff remain engaged with each other and the wider university community, bridging the communication gaps between schools and departments.

### **Initiatives and Projects**

University staff, including Staff Council members, attended a forum on October 19 to answer questions by representatives from NECHE (New England Commission of Higher Education) as part of the university's accreditation process.

During the holiday season, Staff Council partnered with Residential Life and Public Safety to support the Howie's Holiday Toy Drive. Nearly 400 toys and gift cards were donated and subsequently delivered to the Asylum Hill Boys & Girls Club on Thursday, December 9.

For the Outstanding Staff Awards, 61 nominations were secured this year; the previous record was 24 nominations. Due to the large number of highly deserving staff, six staff received awards rather than the usual five. Recipients were Ed Bernstein, Tracy Carlson, Lief Ellis, Amy Kopec, Bevin Rainwater, and Matt Weber. Congratulations to the winners!

Throughout the year, Staff Council Delegates on university committees continued to represent staff interests and give them a voice in important university decisions. Thanks to their work, staff have benefited from shared information; numerous workshops and lectures; expanded bereavement, inclement weather, remote work, and tuition remission policies; and much more. Many thanks to our Delegates for representing staff in all these ways.

We look forward to maintaining and increasing our engagement and impact next year and into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Wollenberg, Chair