

GENESEE STAFF COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes: February 10, 2023

9:00 – 9:30 AM – Welcome, Housekeeping, Announcements

- Group Norms
- Approval of January meeting minutes
- Updates from Co-Chairs
- Bylaws Proposals

9:30 – 9:55 AM – Annual Report Discussion

9:55 – 10:00 AM – Break

10:00 – 11:00 AM – Nathan Harris: Research and assessments of Staff Councils

11:00 – 11:05 AM – Break

11:05 – 11:15 AM – Debrief on Nathan Harris Presentation

11:15 AM– 11:45 AM – SMD/SON Expansion Discussion

11:45 – Noon – Wrap-Up

- Update on Outreach Event Planning (Outreach & Engagement Committee)
- March in-person meeting
- Matters arising
- Summary, wrap up, and takeaways
- Good news

Attendees: Co-Chair Jon Powers, Co-Chair Amanda Sharpe, Melinda Adelman, Brandi Bangle, Kristi Brock, Jane Bryant, Angela Buchiere, Terra Buttram, Anthony Campbell, Karen Cera, Kris Condello, Diane Crane, Jenny Hamson, Amy Kadrie, Kaitlin Legg, Heidi Mergenthaler, Darrin Meszler, Harish Nayak, Bailey Nixon, Michael Occhino, Brenda Pitoni, Tacarah Reyes, Sarah Siddiqui, Anthony Siragusa, Molly Snyder, Dan Watts, Paul Wlosinski, Joe Williams

Guest: Professor Nathan Harris

Welcome, Housekeeping, Announcements

Amanda Sharpe: Welcome everyone, please take a few minutes to review our group norms. We will start off today with approval of the January meeting minutes.

Harish Nayak: The minutes have been posted in Teams. There was a motion to approve, and a second. The minutes have been approved for posting.

Jon Powers: As you all know, we had a very nice GSC reception at the Provost's house, and he said he intends to have us again in the future. The Co-Chairs had a meeting with David Figlio, and primarily discussed staff concerns around the compressed academic calendar. They are planning to address that and add a longer winter break in future years. He also talked about the future financial model that will likely be rolling out for FY25. The Strategic Plan is being presented at Board Retreat in DC next week.

Amanda Sharpe: We also met with Kathy Gallucci and brought up our staff council budget for FY24. She confirmed that our request is included with the HR request, which is currently pending. We gave her some staff feedback about the current banded fee structure for parking and retirement contribution. We talked about vacation time, and they are benchmarking our vacation time with other institutions to see how we compare. They are also looking at giving CPM and wage transparency updates to the community. We offered as Co-Chairs to moderate town halls if that would be helpful. They are also working on a new staff recognition program that will roll out in phases.

Jon Powers: We had a meeting with Jim Chodak regarding parking, and they are working on various proposals to improve the parking situation. They currently have over 500 participants utilizing the RTS Bus Pass program. He is working to get a bus stop put back on River Campus for weekdays. We also met with a group from Dept of Public Safety. DPS has 27 current vacancies, and they in particular need dispatchers right now. They're also looking into improving campus lighting and parking lot safety. They're also looking into new blue light camera technologies.

Amanda Sharpe: Updates on committee participation—Kaitlin is participating on the IOEI search committee, and Diane is participating on the Communications search committee. We have two reps on the new employee orientation committee: Kristi Brock and Paul Wlosinski.

Jon Powers: We have two proposed changes to the bylaws:

- Change Section V. A. Executive Committee ii. from "*Standing invitations shall be extended to the Chairs of Council committees.*" to "Periodic invitations shall be extended to the Chairs of Council committees. Any representative may request time to attend an Executive Committee meeting for discussion of a specific topic by submitting a request to the Co-Chairs."
- Change Section II. C. v. from "*Immediate past Co-Chairs (who do not remain as election members of the Council) can be appointed as ex officio members at the discretion of the current Co-Chairs.*" to "Immediate past Council Co-Chair

(refer to II. B. i. c.)” as Co-Chair ex officio status is already covered elsewhere in the bylaws.

- We will plan to vote on these bylaws changes next month.

Annual Report

Jane Bryant: The draft has been posted in Teams. The Communications Committee would love general feedback on the report structure, and if you have any additions from your districts please put them in the comments. This is the text we will use, and University Communications has agreed to package it and create the final version for us. Our DEI section is currently lacking in specifics.

Outreach and Engagement Update

Bailey Nixon: The Outreach and Engagement Committee has two event proposals. The first is a horticulture tour of the University grounds. We would arrange buses, each bus could hold 29 people and we could arrange for two buses. This would be for May/June. Earlier in the year, we could arrange a historical tour of the University focused on the buildings. This would be a bus tour as well, allowing for accessibility. There would be a break around halfway through each to provide refreshments and socialize. The third option would be doing a tour at the MAG with docents. Our group has been favoring the first two event options, but we would like your feedback.

Diane Crane (in chat): Random idea... what about a GSC table at Tasty Tuesdays where we take turns manning the table? Too RC focused? I heard the Provost say he'll be out there again this summer.

Ashley Smith (in chat): Would it be possible to get a special collections tour of the MAG? The warehouses are pretty amazing and a unique opportunity that one could not get during a normal tour of the MAG.

Melinda Adelman (in chat): Special collections of the libraries and/or Eastman might be cool too.

Sarah Siddiqui (in chat): Studio X as well, I believe the university cabinet had a meeting there a few weeks ago

Jon Powers: These first events are a pilot, if it goes really well we can add additional events to accommodate more attendees.

March in-person meeting

Karen Cera: The March 10 meeting will be at LLE from 8:45am to noon, including tours. We do need everyone to bring your university ID to check-in. Parking will be available, and we will do a group photo at the end of the meeting. The viewing galleries for the lasers are not available via elevator, only via stairs.

Amanda Sharpe: We will be providing a light breakfast and coffee, but not lunch. We are in the process of developing an agenda for the meeting.

Jon Powers: It will be bench-like seating in this conference room, no tables.

Nathan Harris—Research into Staff Councils

Amanda Sharpe: We are excited to welcome Professor Nathan Harris from the Warner School, who has done a lot of research looking at staff councils.

Nathan Harris: I want to acknowledge my colleague, doctoral student Paul Gorelik, who has been an incredibly important partner in this research. 68% of AAU institutions have staff councils, but 32% do not. Staff councils feature a variety of selection methods (60% are comprised of elected reps, 22% are comprised of appointed reps). Staff councils fall into two categories—Advisory staff councils (51%) and advocacy staff councils (49%)

- Advisory focused: facilitate communication among/between employees, a forum to discuss workplace concerns and inform institutional policies, and report to senior administrators.
- Advocacy staff councils: Appoint employees to serve on university committees, integrate staff council into institutional governance, investigate issues or problems that affect staff, propose new institutional policies or changes to existing institutional policies

Jon Powers: You mention staff councils having charters in addition to bylaws, and we do not have one. Is that unusual for a staff council?

Nathan Harris: It's important to seek collaboration with other individuals and parties across the institution to see what avenues exist for formalizing relationships between other university offices/leadership. If there is not a formal protection codified in hard governance, it's possible that those policies and procedures will change as relationships change.

Melinda Adelman: The charter question goes hand in hand with the vulnerability individual staff have as opposed to faculty. We don't have tenure/job protection. We're replaceable and interchangeable based on who is in leadership positions. That's reflected further in the fact that our staff council does not have a charter.

Ashley Smith (in chat): Staff are seen as an expense and actually a really large expense to any institution. Large professional staff growth at colleges and universities started about 20+ years ago, this gets misunderstood by faculty as to the important role professional staff play in making the university compliant/run/etc. vs. just administrative bloat. Staff serve different roles and different needs than faculty.

Nathan Harris: There is a belief still in higher education that staff are overhead. How do you navigate a space where you will consistently encounter questions about what value and expertise you bring to the institution? I do think there is new attention around retention and student wellness

Melinda Adelman (in chat): Does your research include how staff councils go about enacting a charter? How can staff make that kind of demand from leadership when they don't have individual job protection?

Jon Powers: Can you talk about your assessment of what you've seen in your research

regarding our specific staff council and any direction we should consider?

Nathan Harris: The documentation of the GSC has changed since the beginning of our research. Our analysis put the GSC more in the “advisory” category. There’s an opening for protecting the idea that there is engagement and commitment to staff. I would suggest having language that states the GSC has protected audiences with senior officials and constituents, and avoid language that suggests we are a mechanism or a tool of senior administration.

Angela Buchiere: Can you talk a little bit about similarities and differences between us and the Faculty Senate?

Nathan Harris: Organizational culture drives organizational structure, and vice versa, so you get a feedback loop. If you have a more clearly defined set of structures, you have a more clearly delineated set of communications and discussions about a broad yet specific set of topics. The Faculty Senate talks about all things relating to academic and broader strategic institutional affairs. It’s important to have some definition of the issues that the Council tackles, without being too specific. It’s incredibly important that our university have a space for staff to inform decisions, so that leadership understands the perspective of everyone (staff, faculty, students).

Debrief from Nate Harris Presentation

Diane Crane: Has there ever been conversation about having a Board of Trustees member that was a part of our work?

Amanda Sharpe: Not to my knowledge, but it’s something we could explore. We have brought the charter up with leadership before, and we will be revisiting the forming of a charter to determine what exactly our next steps would be. In Middle States review, one of my responsibilities is to write about the GSC for a “staff governance” section about the university. We currently do not have the same well-established support as faculty and student governance. Perhaps Nate could come to orientation day and give his “structural talk” to people, regarding the importance of staff governance overall.

Ashley Smith: In Nate’s research, did he find any other organizations like us that started without a charter? If so, what was their process in getting established with a charter?

Amanda Sharpe: We’ll start a thread in Teams, if you have any questions for Nate put them in that thread. We’ll either invite him again or ask him to gather information for us.

Proposed SMD/SON Expansion

Jon Powers: We met with the group from SMD/SON to discuss this expansion proposal (adding 15 additional members to GSC from those areas). No concerns were expressed during this meeting, and we received positive feedback from these areas. The biggest questions are still about those district groupings: School of Nursing—1

rep, Admin & Education (1 rep), Education & Research (3 reps), Clinical & research (6 reps), Research (2 reps). We'll be discussing this in more depth with people who are familiar with these areas. The SMD IT and Facilities staff would be folded into current AuxUnion district instead of putting them in one of the new districts.

[The proposal was put to a vote. 19 voted in favor, and 1 opposed. Post-meeting, additional concerns were expressed, and we will be revisiting the expansion proposal in more depth at the March meeting.]

Brenda Pitoni: Just a suggestion that any time the Council is going to vote on anything at a meeting, it would be good to put that in the agenda.

Wrap-Up

Amanda Sharpe: Joe Williams was asked to be in the video that goes along with the Strategic Plan that they are sharing at the Board retreat.

Kristi Brock: I am on the 1st Generation Students and Families Committee, Dawn Bruner will be conducting several scheduled viewing events to a selection of paid webinars all focused on the topic of supporting 1st generation students. If you are interested, please reach out to me. The information is posted in Teams.

Joe Williams: Will we be a part of the development of the staff recognition process that they are creating?

Rebecca Walters: Yes, we will be involving staff members in our committee as we evaluate rolling out the rewards program. We will get someone from this group, and maybe some other staff members as well.