

# Annual Report of the UNCSA Staff Council 2019-2020

The mission of the UNCSA Staff Council is to foster a positive and respectful working environment by advocating the interests and concerns of each staff member.

The leadership of the council includes Elizabeth White, chair; Matt Horvat, past chair; Sharon Fogarty, chair elect; Heather Lathrop, secretary/treasurer; Victoria Scott, parliamentarian; Kathryn Rowe, chair of membership and elections committee; Marquette Smith, chair of professional development committee; Ramona Richmond, chair of community service and sustainability; Amber Russell, chair of special events and awards committee.

## Summary

This year had a number of influences outside the scope of the University that had a negative impact on staff morale and engagement. However, there were some workplace influences that were within the University's capabilities to have addressed, and that had not been addressed in previous years. With 2020 bringing the five-year strategic plan to a close, the University has more work to do to "Foster a Quality Workplace." Staff Council advocates for frequent and scheduled feedback from the employees up through the leadership hierarchy and also feedback across the University as much of staff's work is interdependent on people and departments outside their own. And as the biggest impact on an employee's work environment is led by their manager, Staff Council advocates for continued and extensive training of managers and supervisors in helping to make the University more responsive and agile in shifting global and education markets.

## A Year Like No Other

Circumstances beyond the control of much of the staff have had an impact on workload, engagement, morale this year. A disruption in the operational ecosystem had adverse effects across multiple departments and divisions.

This report covers July 2019-April 2020. Some of the factors that led to decreased employee engagement included:

- Several vacancies in the Student Affairs division, particularly in multiple leadership areas. Vacancies caused remaining staff to take on extra work duties. In addition, several Student Affairs staff and staff from interdependent divisions or departments (Police, etc.) were on multiple search committees for Student Affairs positions. Reviewing resumes, cover letters and interviewing multiple candidates for per vacancies were additional hours added on to their workloads. High turnover not only has a financial impact on the University, but strains existing people resources.
- Clear Pricing Plan involving the State Health Plan delayed open enrollment and shortened the enrollment period. Coverage of the possible changes to the State Health Plan caused anxiety for staff for much of the summer and early fall.
- N.C. Legislature did not pass a State budget that included new university funding and funding for annual raises, while other state employees were given funding for raises.

- Staff served on several campus leadership search committees: Chancellor, Provost, Dean of Filmmaking, Associate Vice Chancellor of Finance, or in stakeholders' meetings with the candidates. Staff Council welcomes the opportunity to give input on the candidate selection and to provide candidates with a staff perspective. The results of simultaneous vacancies in University leadership and other positions has not only an impact on operation efficiency, but on staff workload.
- The COVID-19 pandemic forced only essential employees to remain on campus. Figuring out who was designated "essential" or "mandatory" employees was not clear to all of the staff. It was reported to Staff Council that some staff didn't know whether to report or not report to campus and their managers didn't communicate with them.

## Staff Advocacy

The following items were discussed with leadership in regard to its negative impact on staff.

- Staff members, considered in good standing with the University and certainly well-respected among their peers and coworkers, were voluntarily leaving or retiring from the University. (Human Resources can provide the specific number of voluntary separations and retirements.)
- In the fall, words suggesting members a particular department be killed were written on University property. It took several weeks before the message was removed, and then other similar messages appeared in its place. Meanwhile, staff across several departments felt the lack of urgency to remove the words unacceptable, frustrating, and demoralizing.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic early weeks, the institution communicated well with students and faculty. For the staff, there was a heavy reliance on communication from middle and lower management that didn't occur to all staff members. Some staff reported not hearing from their direct supervisor for more than a week.

## 2019-2020 Highlights

**Personnel Committee** – Staff Council presented reports on Staff Council concerns and activities at the Board of Trustees' Personnel Committee meetings.

**Redistricting** - Staff Council is considering the makeup of the Staff Council districts due to the Semans Academic & Administration building coming back online, and leveraging the reorganization of departments to better facilitate communications within departments or divisions that already meet or have frequent interactions. At the time of this report, a proposal is under consideration.

**Elections for 2020-2021** - Once redistricting is decided, the Staff Council needs to determine if enough staff have access to vote electronically in the elections for representatives of even-numbered districts. Elections are usually held at the end of April with officers elected in June. At the time of this report, the majority of campus is teleworking or on paid administrative leave. Following the new slate of representatives, then elections of a Chair-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer for 2020-21 will be elected by the representatives.

**Supporting Other Advocate Groups** –Staff Council executive team members reached out to meet with Faculty Council and Student Government Association (SGA) executive teams, respectively. The effort is to be supportive in shared initiatives campus advocacy groups are pursuing and learning where our

common goals intersect. Faculty and Staff councils are exploring and understanding the University budgeting process to provide input on budget decisions. Staff Council and SGA will be supporting one another in voter registration and participation initiatives.

**University Alumni** – Preliminary discussions begun in April 2020 with Advancement, Faculty Council and Staff Council to craft some type of alumni status for staff and faculty that retire or who have left the University in good standing and want to continue to be a part of the UNCSA family. Large business corporations have such programs not only for the social aspect, but for mentoring and advocating opportunities. Efforts would be to re-engaging former staff to be advocates of the school, the arts, and arts education. Like faculty, staff often maintain strong connections with students and student alumni and therefore we would be strengthening our entire alumni community.

**Staff, Faculty Social Hour** – The Faculty and Staff Councils held a joint social hour at a nearby eating establishment on Aug. 29 2019. Staff and faculty member trio played jazz during the social hour.

**Staff-only Workshop** The day before faculty and student in-service day, Staff participated in a workshop on designing an inclusive community that was led by Shayla Herndon-Edmunds, a keynote speaker for in-service day. The workshop was at maximum capacity and the staff appreciated being included.

**Fall All-Staff Meeting** was well-attended on Sept. 10, 2019. It was held in Crawford Hall. All the interim leaders or new leaders were introduced and spoke briefly to pre-submitted questions from the staff. There were eight speakers: Interim Chancellor Brian Cole, Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Karin Peterson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Michael Smith, Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Chief of Staff Jim De Cristo, Vice Chancellor for Advancement Ed Lewis, Interim Provost and Dean of Student Affairs Tracey Ford, Director of Human Resources Angela Mahoney, University Ombuds Joshua Canzona.

**Staff & Faculty Appreciation Week Oct. 28-Nov.1** – Human Resources led this effort with a strong planning participation from Staff. Feedback expressed at the November Staff Council meeting was that the week was appreciated, but the series of events asked too much time away from work duties. Staff would prefer if the small events were held throughout the year.

**Veteran's Day** – Staff Council was made aware at the last minute that members of the UNCSA Military-Connected Student Task Force were no longer available to make arrangements to honor our military staff. Staff Council contacted Purchasing to coordinate with Aramark to provide lunch. Staff Council brought Veteran's Day planning to the attention of the Quality Workplace Committee to request that a larger group be in charge of honoring veterans and students of military affiliation.

**Listening Session for the Chancellor Search Committee** – The Staff Listening Session had the highest participation of all six listening sessions with at least 35 people attending or providing comments/questions to the Chancellor search firm.

**State Employee Combined Campaign** – Staff Council facilitated in distributing the SECC printed material. Participation in the campaign was lower than in previous years, but the University is also in a public phase of its comprehensive campaign.

**Holiday Potluck** – Our annual Holiday Potluck had fewer participation than in previous years, though the live entertainment from members of our musical-gifted alumni staff was well received. There seems to

be an increase in department and division holiday parties. Staff Council will be reviewing moving this event to a less busy time of the year.

**Staff, Faculty Social Hour** – The Faculty and Staff Councils held a joint social hour at a nearby eating establishment on Jan. 21, 2020. Fewer staff attended than then number that attended the fall social.

**Spring All-Staff Meeting** held Feb. 13, 2020 garnered fewer staff to attend then in the fall though the speakers were Senior Vice President for Human Resources and Chief Human Resources Officer Matt Brody and Associate Vice President for Employee Relations and University Equal Opportunity Officer Chris Chiron from the UNC System Office. Brody, Chiron and Angela Mahoney responded to pre-submitted questions as well as questions from those in attendance.

**Annual Chili Cook-Off** of Feb. 18,2020 yielded only two entries, while several people stopped by in hopes of sampling chili. Staff Council will be reviewing offering this event.

**Staff Council Night at Carolina Thunderbirds** scheduled for March 27 was postpone due to the pandemic. Staff Council will offer another sporting event outing at a later time or next academic year.

## Committee Reports

I have provided a three-year range of statistics to show the decrease in engagement.

**Professional Development Committee.** Human Resources offered training for employees and managers the year. The Professional Development Committee still held the Professional Development Challenge. Staff who attended seven or more development opportunities met the challenge. Marquette Smith, Chair of Professional Development took another position at North Carolina Central University at the end of February 2020. All in-class HR-led classes were suspended in March due to the pandemic. At that time, three staff members had participated in six classes.

### *2019-2020:*

- 23 staff and faculty participants or 209 if you include staff and faculty who completed the mandatory A.L.I.C.E. training
- 14 Professional development opportunities occurred, 24 opportunities were scheduled
- 0 Employees completed the challenge

### *2018-2019*

- 129 staff and faculty participants
- 44 Professional development opportunities
- 20 Employees completed the challenge

### *2017-2018*

- 204 staff and faculty participants
- 35 Professional development opportunities
- 31 Employees completed the challenge

**Community Service and Sustainability.** Events were chaired by Ramona Richmond. She stepped down in February 2020 due to the ongoing demands as Interim Director of Residence Life. The Staff Council and the committee had great hopes in developing a partnership with nearby Easton Elementary School, but it proved difficult to get volunteer opportunities scheduled with Easton. The Staff Council decided to focus all of its efforts on supporting the students' Pickle Pantry at their various events, sorting and packing the Pickle Pantry bags. When the majority of the students were moved off campus due to the pandemic, the number of the students in need grew to the point the shelves were bare. A call went out to staff and faculty to purchase food, many items that grocers were restricting quantity levels. The response was incredible. Our shelves were filled!

**Special Events & Awards.** Events were chaired by Amber Russell. Staff helped and attended the various events during Staff and Faculty Appreciation Week. An annual Holiday Potluck and Chili Cook-Off are hosted. These events are being re-examined due to low engagement. March's Hockey Game was postponed due to the pandemic canceling the game. We will be soliciting nominations for the Staff Council Professional Excellence and the Staff Council Community Service awards. These awards will be announced at the Celebration of Excellence, which is postponed due to the governor's stay-at-home orders. The Staff Assembly's Chancellor's Cup Golf Tournament was canceled this year due to the pandemic. We were planning to send two teams and three volunteers to participate in this fundraising event for staff scholarships.

**Standing Ovations** – An appreciation recognition program in its third year. Submissions from staff were down dramatically, and there were no more submissions since mid-February.

- *2019-2020* 19 individuals recognized and no departments recognized
- *2018-2019* 48 individuals and 5 departments recognized
- *2017-2018* 52 individuals and 6 departments recognized

**Participation in UNC Staff Assembly.** The Staff Council chair, chair-elect and past chair are the campus delegates to the UNC Staff Assembly, and the secretary/treasurer serves as the alternate. All three delegates have attended and actively participated in all Staff Assembly meetings. Past chair Matt Horvat was elected to serve as Secretary of the UNC Staff Assembly. Additionally, the Staff Council has lent their support to Staff Assembly initiatives including a review of the UNC System Annual Raise Process (ARP).

Respectively submitted by Elizabeth H. White, 2019-2020 UNCSCA Staff Council Chair