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## President's Corner



Greetings Operating Staff,

'Tis the season to be grateful! As the holidays are fast approaching for some of us, this means we will be spending time cleaning, cooking and eating with family and friends. Consider offering a to-go meal to a neighbor or someone less fortunate during the holidays. Often, doing something for others helps you realize that your situation is not as bad as it once seemed. On the other hand, some of us may find this time of year both mentally and emotionally challenging. If this is you, please know

we have [services in our community and across campus](#) to help you.

Research indicates that [expressing gratitude is beneficial for our health and well-being](#). We are happier when we are grateful. We live in a season where people are battling fears and have concerns about the pandemic and many social injustices while juggling home and work. I want to remind everyone that it is vital to have self-care. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has great [tips to offer on self-care](#). It is also essential to stay connected with your team.

Is your department or team looking for a way to connect virtually? As a supervisor or someone over a department, it is now more important than ever to keep your team engaged and connected. Research shows that some of the best work is completed in teams that are connected. NIU Recreation offers 30-minute virtual sessions of relaxation/guided meditation/quick team-building exercises that can get or keep your teams connected. The price is just \$40 for a 30-minute session. This minimal cost is payable by any payment method, including cost centers. If you would like to sign up for this invaluable service, email [recreation@niu.edu](mailto:recreation@niu.edu) and we will get your team set up.

I have enjoyed becoming a part of the newly created Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Social Justice Committee. I am sure we will come together to figure out how our faculty can look more like our student populations in the years to come. I understand we have much work to do, but anything worth doing is not easy.

The results are in from the 2020-2021 OSC priorities list. Many of the votes indicated that civil service workers were concerned with layoffs, bumping rights and possible furloughs. The Operating Staff Council completely understands this during a time of uncertainty. I encourage you to attend the Dec. 3 OSC meeting at 9 a.m. Pulchratia Smith, director of Human Resources, will be giving a presentation on how bumping rights work and answering important HR questions. If you do not know something, educate yourself, ask for the policy and then read it to know how things work. Join the board of trustees meeting and listen to what is going on at our university. All the meetings are currently virtual, so it makes it easier than ever to listen in.

I am encouraged that through everything, NIU is strategically sticking to our [mission](#). "The mission of Northern Illinois University is to empower students through educational excellence and experiential learning as we pursue knowledge, share our research and artistry, and engage communities for the benefit of the region, state, nation and world."

I hope you can enjoy the upcoming holidays with the people you love, and I look forward to seeing you all again when it is safe to do so. Do not forget to three W's: wash your hands, wear your mask and watch your distance to help reduce the spread.

Stronger Together,

Natasha Johnson  
President, Operating Staff Council 2020-2021  
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# Contest: Where Have You?

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Thanksgiving and the holidays are here; it seems like they arrive earlier and earlier each year. In this day and age of face masks, Zoom meetings, social distancing and working remotely, it is harder and harder to feel connected to not only family, but co-workers as well.

The Operating Staff Council at NIU would like to bring a bit of levity to our stressful lives and show that even though we are all distanced, we are still all very much alike and together.

Laughter is a good way to relieve stress and lighten your emotional load. With that in mind, the staff of your Northern Staff News along with the Public Relations Committee would like to know:

- What is the most interesting place you've had to work remotely?
- What is the funniest place you've had to work remotely?
- What is the funniest thing that's happened to you while working remotely for NIU?

Since I cannot enter nor win this little contest, I'll go first to give you an idea.

The funniest place I've worked remotely: Driving down the interstate. My husband was driving, I had my laptop out answering emails, filing paperwork and updating MyNIU schedules.

The most interesting place I've worked remotely: The middle of a forested campground, using my cellphone as a hotspot, while attending several Teams meetings. Trees blowing in the wind behind me and my husband building a fire in order to make breakfast.

Where have you worked? **Tell us your funniest place, your most interesting place, funniest thing or all three.** The winner in each category (chosen by the Public Relations Committee from all entrants) will win a **Visa gift card**. Deadline to submit answers is 4:30 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 4.**

The winners will be announced in the next newsletter, along with answers of some of the participants, space providing. If you wish not to be identified, please let us know.

# Confessions of a Rookie

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## Rookie: Ravea Alexis

University Recreation and Wellness

Hire date: March 1, 2019

In this edition we are sitting down with Ravea Alexis from University Recreation. Tell me Ravea, what do you do for University Recreation?

*I am an office manager.*

Well, that sounds pretty straightforward. I bet University Recreation is an awesome department already but is there anything you would want to add to it?

*I think we definitely need an office pygmy goat.*

Well, OK then. A pygmy goat. That's a new one.

*I'd even settle for a chinchilla or sugar glider.*

I would have thought if there were to be an office mascot in recreation, it should be a mountain goat or a monkey — reminiscent of climbing and the monkey bars in elementary school. A pygmy goat would work for the smaller space, though.

Besides being at work, is there a favorite place you'd rather be?

*Probably Japan. I've gone several times and the natural beauty, architecture, food and culture are always an experience.*

Not to mention they have Godzilla! I'm sensing a theme here...

Switching gears, let's delve into that whole super power thing... Do you have a least favorite superhero?

*Superman. No seriously, he's overpowered and so milquetoast he makes drywall seem like it has a personality.*

Wow. It sounds like you have a pretty strong opinion on this.

*It's a hill I'm willing to die on.*

I don't think we have to go that far, do you? Let's discuss something more pleasant... If you could write a book about your life, what would the title be and why?

*Insects, Oceans, and Mouth Breathers. Only because these are three things I can't stand and my goal is to subvert the reader's expectations right off the bat.*

Got it...so you must not be a fan of Godzilla then, either. I hear he likes to hang out in the ocean.

One last question Ravea, what is your secret talent no one knows about?

*If I told you that, then it wouldn't be much of a secret talent anymore.*

Well, we never said it had to stay a secret, now did we?

That's been this edition of Confessions of a Rookie. If you want to play along, **please do**, and email Rave Meyer at [RMeyer@niu.edu](mailto:RMeyer@niu.edu). In this time of working remotely, finding individuals to play along is a bit tough. Help keep this article going by emailing your desire to be the next rookie.

# FAFSA Time

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The fall 2020 semester is in progress, and the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office is already preparing for the 2021-2022 academic year. The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) filing period for the 2021-2022 academic year started Thursday, Oct. 1, 2020. Students will use their parent's, guardian's and/or their own 2019 tax information to complete next year's FAFSA.

Please help us spread the word by reminding your students that a FAFSA needs to be completed every year. Also, please encourage them to file their 2021-2022 FAFSA as early as possible. Some funds are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. The sooner a student submits their completed FAFSA, the more likely they are to receive assistance, if they are eligible. For returning students, the deadline to submit a 2021-2022 FAFSA for priority access to MAP Grant is Dec. 1, 2020. For assistance in completing the FAFSA, students can call 800-4FED-AID, or visit [Federal Student Aid](#) to chat with a representative.

The Retention of Illinois Students and Equity (RISE) Act became law in January 2020. With this act, eligible undocumented students and transgender students who are disqualified from federal financial aid, but are Illinois residents, can now apply for all forms of state financial aid. Instead of the FAFSA, students would complete the [Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid](#). Students can find more information along with the application on the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#) website.

The Financial Aid and Scholarship Office has limited in-person services during the present time, however, we are available 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday via phone, email or video calls. Please call 815-753-1395 to speak to a representative or schedule an appointment that best serves your needs. You can also email any questions to [finaid@niu.edu](mailto:finaid@niu.edu) or visit our [FAQ section](#).

Thank you for your assistance. Go Huskies!

## What to Do If You Are A Victim of Unemployment Identity Theft/Fraud

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On Oct. 15, 2020, the NIU community received an email from NIU's Human Resource Services regarding an increase in unemployment fraud/identity theft. Because of this, OSC wanted to share some tips on steps to take if you have been a victim, and/or offer some preventative measure tips.

Go to the [Illinois Department of Employment Security \(IDES\)](#) website to find information on how to know if you have been a victim of unemployment insurance benefits identity theft and what to do next. There are five different ways you can be made aware/notified that you have been a victim. Some may only receive one form; others may receive all five. You should also [watch this video from IDES](#).

Once you know:

- Contact the IDES' Benefit Payment Control Division either via phone or online. Only contact using one method or it will delay the response to your inquiry.
  - Call: 1-800-245-9762 or 1-800-814-0513
    - You will need to select option No. 1 for claimant, then option No. 5 to report identity theft, then leave your name, state claim number or SSN, and your call back number. They will return your call in the order it was received.
  - Online: [IDES Contact Form](#)
    - On the drop down, select the option, "UI Fraud/Identity Theft" and **do not** include social security numbers or other personal identifiable information in the comment section.
- If you receive the debit card from KeyBank, **do not** activate it; shred it/destroy it, but keep the letter it comes attached to, along with any of the other letters/correspondence you may receive.
- File an Unemployment Benefits Identity Theft Report

- Go to the [Federal Trade Commission](#) website and on the top right select "Click here to report."
- After you create the report, you will also want to create an account. This is to allow you to make any updates to your report, as you receive more information. After these two steps are completed, you will receive a personal recovery plan that can give you some other steps and tips to follow. Watch this [video for more information on these steps](#).
- Go to [AnnualCreditReport.com](#) to request your free credit report or call 1-877-322-8228. You will need to provide your name, address, SSN and date of birth to verify your identity. Review it carefully for any fraudulent activity.
  - It is also recommended to place a fraud alert on your credit report. You can contact any of the three national credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion) and ask them to place a fraud alert on your credit report. This is free, and the credit bureau will contact the other two for you. Visit the [Federal Trade Commission Consumer Information](#) site for more information on placing a fraud alert and contact information for the three national credit bureaus.
- Technology
  - Clear your cache/internet history from all browsers you have used on all devices.
  - Make sure that NIU IT has been notified and that your account hasn't been compromised.
  - View other [videos from the Federal Trade Commission](#) on other information regarding fraud/scam prevention, fraud/scam reporting and security tips.

# Employment Changes

## September 2020

### *Welcome New Employees:*

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**Jeffrey Donohue Jr.**, Business/Administrative Associate – Libraries

**Mary Studebaker-Reed**, Office Support Specialist – School of Interdisciplinary Health Professions

**Maria Thompson**, Account Technician – Accounts Payable and Travel

### *Death:*

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**Joann Gill**, Telephone Operator II – eSports Network

### *Retirements:*

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**Glenda Davies**, Food Service Manager – Residential Dining Service

**Thomas Finn**, Building Service Worker – Building Services

**Gary Parquette**, Food Service Sanitation Laborer – Residential Dining Service

### *Separations:*

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**Nia Burrows**, Residence Hall Attendant – Public Safety

**Michael Hagerman**, Security Guard – Public Safety

**Cody Hunt**, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Campus Dining Service

**Wardell Roseman Jr.**, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Campus Dining Service

**Francesca Ruscetti**, Program Assistant – School of Interdisciplinary Health Professions

**Lisa Smith**, Administrative Assistant – Gift Planning

**Andrew Sotomayor**, Police Officer – Public Safety

**Judith Stecker**, Main Desk Attendant – Holmes Student Center

**Caitlyn Warren**, Program Adviser – Precollegiate-Upward Bound

**Nicole Wilson**, Public Information Associate – Administration and Finance

## October 2020

### *Welcome New Employees:*

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**Cathy Davis**, Financial Aid Manager – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office

**Ashley Ern**, Office Support Specialist – College of Health and Human Sciences

**Melissa Hubbuch**, Medical Office Associate – Allied Health and Communicative Disorders

**John Vain II**, Procurement Officer – Materials Management

### *Retirements:*

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**Mark Beaird**, Inventory Specialist – Materials Management

**Anne Seitzinger**, Study Abroad Assistant Director – Vice President International Affairs

### *Separations:*

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**Bryan Campbell**, Library Assistant – Libraries

**Michael Castillo**, Admissions/Records Representative – Graduate School

**Christy Cunningham**, Program Adviser – Finance

**Jeremy Falk**, Admissions/Records Specialist II – Graduate School

**Julnasha Morehead**, Program Adviser – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Christine Morelle**, Procurement Officer – Procurement and Strategic Sourcing

**Cristy Munos**, Immigration Specialist – International Student and Scholar Services

**Jacqueline Neely**, Storekeeper II – Materials Management

**Juanita Rabelo**, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Campus Dining Service

**Shelby Tolliver**, Building Service Foreman – Building Services

**Jeremy Weems**, Snack Bar Attendant – Campus Dining Service

**Angela Wojdak**, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center

## Have a Voice...

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OSC is seeking an operating staff employee interested in serving on the Campus Parking Committee (CPC).

The duties of the CPC shall be:

- To act as the standing advisory body to the associate vice president of Facilities Management and Campus Services, the vice president of Administration and Finance, and the president pertaining to parking and traffic problems.
- To review and make recommendations regarding the parking fees required through the year. The business manager will periodically update the committee.
- To review, recommend changes to, and develop parking and traffic regulations pertaining to all vehicles as used by students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Such regulations are promulgated by the president under authority granted by the board of trustees.

This is a three-year term effective immediately. Meetings are the third Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. Meetings are currently being held on Teams.

[Committee Interest forms](#) are available on the OSC website.

A [detailed description of the committee](#) can be found on the University Council website.

# Service Awards

## September 2020

### 5 Years

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**Elizabeth Chilton** – Intercollegiate Athletics

**James Huizenga** – Student Affairs Central

**Jennifer Kopecky** – Continuing Professional Education

**Susan Mizgalski** – College of Education

**Jacqueline Neely** – Materials Management

**Jenna Pracht** – Orientation and Family Connections

**Skylar Robinson** – Materials Management

### 10 Years

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**Andrea Allen** – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office

**Christy Cunningham** – Finance

**Sofia Komitas** – Residential Dining Services

**Cheryl Korth** – Mathematical Sciences

**Dawn Montgomery** – Housing and Residential Services

### 15 Years

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**Lucas Bailey** – Application Services

**Devon Buckle** – Public Safety

**Kimberly Keith** – Building Services

### 20 Years

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**Jeanne Johnson** – Kinesiology and Physical Education

**Shane Larsen** – Building Services

### 25 Years

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**Tim Rasmussen** – Physical Plant

### 30 Years

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**Lisa King** – CHANCE Program

## October 2020

### 5 Years

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**Samantha Bonnell** – Materials Management

**Rheyc Williams** – Public Safety

### 10 Years

---

**Angela Collin** – Residential Dining Service

**Crystal Doyle** – President's Office

**Angela Gray** – Accountancy

**Christine Lagattola** – Intercollegiate Athletics

**Cynthia Meeks** – Holmes Student Center

**Sara Richter** – Libraries

**Eric Schetley** – College of Health and Human Sciences

**Michael Storandt** – Transportation

### 15 Years

---

**Elizabeth Wright** – President's Office

**Jason Wright** – Public Safety

### 20 Years

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**Jessica Adeoti** – Web and Internal Communications

**William Baker** – Intercollegiate Athletics

**Amy Deegan** – Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning

**Michael McNeil** – Building Services

**Jonathon Ostenburg** – Application Services

**Robert Spangler** – Materials Management

### 25 Years

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**Brenda Jones** – History

### 30 Years

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**Angela Schroeder** – Libraries

**Constance Spohn** – Mathematical Sciences

## Operating Staff Dependent Scholarship

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MyScholarships makes applying for the Operating Staff Dependent Scholarship easy. All students need to do is complete and submit the general application and then answer an additional question to be considered for this scholarship. The system will be open in mid-November through January 2021.

For [more information on the scholarship](#) go to the OSC website.

To apply, dependent students should go to the [Scholarship Office website](#).

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