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 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
njohnson11@niu.edu | osc@niu.edu
Contest: Where Have You?

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

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.

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

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. 3 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

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 or visit our FAQ section.

Thank you for your assistance. Go Huskies!
Employment Changes

September 2020

Welcome New Employees:

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:

Joann Gill, Telephone Operator II – eSports Network

Retirements:

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:

Nia Burrows, Residence Hall Attendant – Public Safety
Michael Hagerman, Security Guard – Public Safety
Cody Hunt, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Campus Dining Service

October 2020

Welcome New Employees:

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

Retirements:

Mark Beaird, Inventory Specialist – Materials Management
Anne Seitzinger, Study Abroad Assistant Director – Vice President International Affairs

Separations:

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 Toller, 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...

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.
September 2020

5 Years
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
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
Lucas Bailey – Application Services
Devon Buckle – Public Safety
Kimberly Keith – Building Services

20 Years
Jeanne Johnson – Kinesiology and Physical Education
Shane Larsen – Building Services

25 Years
Tim Rasmussen – Physical Plant

30 Years
Lisa King – CHANCE Program

October 2020

5 Years
Samantha Bonnell – Materials Management
Rheyce 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
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
Brenda Jones – History

30 Years
Angela Schroeder – Libraries
Constance Spohn – Mathematical Sciences

Operating Staff Dependent Scholarship

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.