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OSC Meetings and Minutes can be found on our [OSC website](#).

If you have any suggestions for future articles, please send an email to tjipson1@niu.edu.

President’s Corner

Greetings Operating Staff,

What a wonderful time of the year — award season. There is nothing like celebrating the outstanding work of our colleagues. Below are the recipients of this year’s university staff awards:



Board of Trustees Staff Award

- Renee Page – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
- Andrew Pemberton – Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications.

Patricia S. Siebrasse Award

- Ryan Damhoff – Chemistry and Biochemistry.
- Angie Gasero – English.

Presidential Award for Staff Excellence

- Michael Corvino – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
- Bryan Flower – Office of Innovation.
- Theresa LaRocco – Graduate School.
- Julie Ann O’Connell – Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies.
- Brian Smith – Human Resource Services.
- Deirdre Young – Registration and Records.

Rising Huskie Award

- Nichole Jackson – Management.
- Julie Yarmolovych – History.

Staff Award for Campus Impact

- Carlos Garcia – Nursing.
- Laura Lundelius – Materials Management.
- Abby VanWieren – Campus Dining Services.

Staff Award for Student Impact

- Kristie Crane – Sociology.
- Stephanie Kummerer – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Staff Inclusive Excellence Award

- Sata Prescott – University Libraries.

Staff Mentorship Award

- Jennifer Gregory – Political Science.
- Yvonne Johnson – Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning.

Staff Team Award for Advancing Creativity and Innovation

- Parking System Improvement Team: Dave Click, Savannah Guerrero, Dan Ihm, Len Lennergard, George Nunez, Jessica Nunez, Elson Smith, Joe Talbert, Rachel Xidis and Beth Zarek.

Let's give a huge congratulations to all our hard-working employees!

I want to remind everyone about the Civil Service Emergency Fund. This fund is used to assist operating staff employees who are in a financial crisis. While we have received many donations in the past, this fund is almost depleted, and we need your help to assist more employees who may be experiencing financial difficulties at this time. Thank you in advance for your willingness to donate. There is no amount too big or small; all donations are appreciated and welcomed. Here are a couple of ways you can donate: Online at go.niu.edu/civil-service-donation (choose Civil Service Emergency Fund under available designations), or send a check with Civil Service Emergency Fund written on the memo line to:

Northern Illinois University Foundation

Altgeld Hall 135
DeKalb, IL 60115-2828

As the fiscal year comes to an end, be sure to take care of yourself. Consider taking some time off — if summer is a light load for you — so you can relax, regroup and recharge (R3) to be ready to welcome our students back for fall.

Take good care,

Natasha Johnson

President, Operating Staff Council 2023-2025
njohnson11@niu.edu | osc@niu.edu

Operating Staff Endowed Dependent Scholarship Winners Named

The Operating Staff Council awarded scholarships to four deserving students:

- **Angelica Sanyal**
Parent: Rana Sanyal, College of Engineering and Engineering Technology.
- **Mackenzie Condon**
Parent: Patrick Condon, Grounds Department.
- **Darby McGowan**
Parent: Mark McGowan, Institutional Communications.
- **Maya Portscheller**
Parent: Danuta Portscheller, NIU Outreach.

Congratulations to all our 2024-2025 awardees!

Thank you to our donors who supported our Operating Staff Endowed Dependent Scholarship fund. This fund provides financial assistance to NIU students who are the children of NIU operating staff (civil service) employees.

These scholarships are made possible by the fundraising activities of civil service employees and payroll deductions. If you would like to help our scholarship fund, there are several ways to donate: Online via the NIU Foundation by using a payroll deduction, or call 1-877-488-2648 or 815-753-1652.

How can your student apply to receive a scholarship? Visit our [OSC Dependent Scholarship Awards](#) webpage for more information. The applications for the 2025-2026 academic year opens Nov. 15, 2024.

Sick Leave Bank Enrollment Now Open

Consistent with the Illinois Sick Leave Bank Act, the Sick Leave Bank program is designed to assist NIU employees who face major health crises and who have exhausted all other available benefits.

Regularly Appointed Employees

If you're a regularly appointed faculty member, supportive professional staff or civil service employee, you can participate in the sick leave bank.

You can join the sick leave bank during the annual benefit choice period that runs May 1-31, 2024. To participate, you must donate at least one day of earned sick time before the end of the benefit choice period.

Sick Leave Bank Donation for Temporary Faculty Represented by the Union Professionals of Illinois

NIU has established a sick leave bank program in which temporary faculty represented by the Union Professionals of Illinois are eligible to participate.

Participating temporary faculty represented by the Union Professionals of Illinois must donate at least one day of sick time at the beginning of the academic year, before Oct. 31. For employees on less than 100% appointment, one day is determined based on their appointment percentage. Donations will be taken from the 25 days of noncumulative sick leave granted at the beginning of the academic year. Participation in the program is then established for the current academic year. For each year they wish to participate, they must donate.

If you have questions regarding the NIU Sick Leave Bank program, contact Payroll at payroll@niu.edu.

Fiscal Year 2025 Benefit Choice Enrollment Period

The Fiscal Year 2025 benefit choice period runs **May 1-31, 2024**, with **benefit elections effective July 1, 2024**. Employees are encouraged to visit the state of Illinois [MyBenefits website](#) and review the [FY 2025 benefit choice booklet](#) for detailed information. Our [NIU HRS website](#) also has been updated as a resource for employees.

During the annual benefit choice period, members may change health plans, add or drop dental or dependent coverage, make changes in life insurance coverage, and opt out or opt in to the group insurance program. Employees are also reminded that they must reenroll each year in the MCAP, DCAP and/or HSA programs, and may enroll in the sick leave bank during the benefit choice period.

Online Enrollment Platform

All FY 2025 benefit choice changes and elections will be processed through the MyBenefits website. The MyBenefits website is accessible via smartphone or tablet, and employees without computer access also can call the MyBenefits Service Center for assistance with processing benefit choice changes and elections. See information below.

MyBenefits Service Center

Customer Service toll free number: 1-844-251-1777

TTY/TTD toll free number: 1-844-251-1778

Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. CT

Deadlines

Employees have from May 1-31, 2024, to process their enrollments or make changes. The benefit choice event can be accessed multiple times throughout the month and is ultimately processed at midnight May 31, 2024. Whatever changes have been entered at that time will be processed.

Smile!

Institutional Communications offers free, professional headshots to all faculty and staff at NIU Career Fairs five times annually. Upcoming photobooth events are posted on the [Photography and Videography site](#). No appointments necessary for headshots.

Customized Training in Your Department from Employee Well-being

Employee Well-being provides customized training for your department on a wide range of topics. There have been numerous departments that have taken advantage of training programs that were tailored to their groups.

Listed below are just a few examples of workshops that can be customized:

- Improving Communication Skills.
- Coping with Change.
- Managing Stress.
- Enhancing Customer Service.
- Dealing with Irate People.
- Wellness at Work.
- Managing Workplace Conflict.
- Developing Leadership Skills.
- Understanding Personal Styles at Work.
- Preventing Workplace Violence.
- Directing Students to Campus Resources.
- Resources for Faculty and Staff.
- Navigating NIU.
- Team Building.
- Leadership.

If you are interested in having a training for your department, please contact them at employeewellbeing@niu.edu.

Do You Know?

Do you know that NIU's Human Resource Services has a webpage where you can read all the updates that typically go to your email?

They do! Check them out at hrs.news.niu.edu.

Do you also know there are several notaries on campus?

Yes, there are! You can [find one near you](#) for when you need that **one paper** notarized once every three years.

Confessions of a Returning Huskie

Seasoned Huskie: Sarah Sweet
Department: Academic Advising Center
Title: First Year Advisor
Hire Date: March 16, 2023

Hello, fellow operating staff employees. I hope everyone has been enjoying this great weather we've been having. Now that we've spent some time meeting a few seasoned Huskies, let's switch it up a bit to meet some of our newer employees. Sarah Sweet, who works as a first-year advisor in our Academic Advising Center, has bravely chosen to interview with us today.

Thanks so much for joining us, Sarah. I know your office must be abuzz this time of the year.

I'm happy to be here.

OK, so I hope you've had some time to reflect on the questions I sent to you earlier. Let's get started with your most irrational fear.

Birds. I am absolutely terrified of birds for no logical reason.

You must really be afraid of the Alfred Hitchcock movie then. I believe "The Simpsons" did an episode on the topic as well. And with these geese in the area, I'm sure you're not alone. On a more positive note, where is your favorite place in the world? No pressure.

If I had to pick one place, that's not a super-cheesy answer like with my loved ones, I'd have to say Ireland. I've been there three times and am going again next month. It's a beautiful place with great people and that is where my family is from, so I still have many relatives there to visit. Many people don't know that I am a first-generation American.

Wow, that's wonderful. You can probably relate to lots of students here. What attracted you to NIU?

I really enjoy the diversity of people I get to work with whether as coworkers and colleagues or students I am working to assist.

I can totally agree with that. People at NIU come from all over the world. I'm glad you chose to join us here.

Let's mix up the questions a bit. Tell me about the number of pairs of shoes you own and your favorite pair.

Forty-five? I probably only wear about four pairs regularly though. My husband hates it. My favorite pair is a pair of Birkenstock slides. There's nothing fancy about them but they are super comfortable, and I use them as a pair of house shoes because I hate to be barefoot but don't like to wear shoes in the house, so I am constantly wearing them.

OMG! I feel the same way. I totally need to get rid of most of my shoes because I only wear a small number of them. They seem good in the store, but just not as comfortable after I get home, and I **hate** to take things back. Those slides sound very comfortable. I'll have to find a pair. So, moving right along. So, you mentioned having lots of relatives. What is your favorite family tradition?

It's not a super-specific tradition, but my extended family gets together every Christmas Eve to celebrate and it's just a crazy, fun time. There are around 75 of us who get together.

Wow, that's a big family. It sounds like lots of fun. Well, our time is winding down. Let's find out how you keep yourself motivated. When you've had a stressful day at work, what's the first thing you do when you get home?

I take the dog for a walk. It helps me to just get out in the fresh air, and he's a major goofball who makes walks more fun. Being in motion helps get the stress out.

That's some great advice. And I'm sure our nice weather has been very helpful for your walks.

How do you overcome setbacks?

A lot of times it is simply a matter of stubbornness. I won't let something prevent me from moving forward.

Who knew stubbornness could be a virtue? 😊. I'm sure it will continue to get you far. I have one final question for you. How do you show kindness to others?

I think showing kindness in small ways makes the biggest impact. I try to pay attention to people and gauge what is happening in their life and then do something for them that I think would be helpful to me if I were in that situation. It doesn't have to be a big thing. If I see someone's hands full, I open a door; if I know you have stressful things happening at home, I'll plan a meal for delivery.

Wow, you sound like a really good friend to have. Well, that's all the time we have for today. I truly appreciate you, Sarah, for sharing with us a bit about yourself.

I'm happy to be here.

If you would like to volunteer to be featured as our next seasoned Huskie or Rookie, please send an email to me at tgipson1@niu.edu. Have a great rest of your day!

Employment Changes

March 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Margaret Always, Anthropology Curator – Anthropology
- Taylor Anderson, Administrative Assistant – Student Affairs Central
- Rene Camarena – Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Matthew Etchison, Culinary Worker II – Residential Dining Service
- Danielle Glaab-Lanigan, Financial Aid Coordinator – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office
- Grant Kahl, Housing Administrator – Housing and Residential Services
- Jessica Lorang, Office Manager – Physics
- Alea Mazur-Flick, Culinary Worker I – Residential Dining Service
- Robert Mills, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Kelly Palestino-Graniel, Community Outreach Worker – P-20 Center

- Alexandria Rangel, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Alejandra Robledo, Community Outreach Worker – P-20 Center
- Denise Sherden, Administrative Aide – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Matthew Usilton, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Mercedes Westmoreland, Child Development Associate – Child Development and Family Center
- Isaac Wilson, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Tinamae Yap, Admissions/Records Representative – Graduate School
- Rachael Yndestad, Program Coordinator – Vice President Research Innovation

Retirement

- Jerry Rose, Building Service Worker – Building Services

Separations

- Keonte Caldwell, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Mathre Etchison, Culinary Worker II – Residential Dining Service
- Veodies Jones Jr., Food Services Stores Laborer – Campus Dining Service
- Donovan-Darnell Jones-Hudson, Building Services Worker – Building Services
- Grant Kahl, Housing Administrator – Housing and Residential Services
- Anouth Keotamon, Culinary Worker I – Residential Dining Services
- Michael Klein, Human Resource Officer – Human Resource Services
- Norma Laino, Office Administrator – School of Art and Design
- Emily McRedmond, Administrative Aide – Center for Child Welfare and Education
- Kendra Nenia, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- Shannon Range, Program Coordinator – University Recreation and Wellness
- Kenneth Riley, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Michael Rosas, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Ramyamalika Thammineni, Human Resource Officer – Human Resource Services
- Jingjin Yu, Accounting Associate – Controller

April 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Melanie Cox, Grants and Contracts Associate – Sponsored Programs Administration
- Nick Janssen, Snack Bar Attendant – Campus Dining Service
- Srinivas Katakam, IT Technical Associate – Report Cards
- Alexandra Rowland, Grants and Contracts Associate – Sponsored Programs Administration
- Mary Ann Warren, Program Coordinator – Graduate School

Retirement

- Noor Harison, Immigration Specialist – Human Resource Services

Separations

- Adan Gonzalez, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Heather Wilcher, Ticket Sales Assistant – Convocation Center

Service Awards

March 2024

5 Years

- Jose Ranirez – Bursar
- Susan Riebe – Bursar
- Deane Hart – Career Services
- Mark Mourlas – College of Business
- Tina Moran – Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning
- Amylin Hendrix – Disability Resource Center
- Julie Slaby – Disability Resource Center
- Rhiannon Luft – Disability Resource Center
- Heidi Carlson – Holmes Student Center
- Joseph Curran – Kinesiology and Physical Education
- Mike Tiema – Office of Information Security

- Anusha Shaik – Report Cards

10 Years

- Joseph Kauzlarich – Continuing Professional Education
- Michael Mosolino – Building Services
- Theresa Stack – Conferences and Event Management
- Kurt Westhoff – Registration and Records
- Zachary Woods – Building Services

15 Years

- Kara Rominski – Physical Plant

20 Years

- Jacqueline Miller – Registration and Records
- Brian Schneider – Residential Dining Service
- Vicky Trotter – Development Administration

25 Years

- Hongqin Chen – Application Services

April 2024

5 Years

- David Bartel – Building Services
- Paula Cowlshaw – Special and Early Education
- Salina Heller – Human Resource Services
- Sarah Limon – Testing Services
- Gregory Martyn – Controller
- Emily Miller – Building Services
- Mary Newquist – Child Development and Family Center
- Robert Skelley – Building Services
- Gary Smith – College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
- Matthew Sroczynski – Building Services
- Philip Terry – Human Resource Services
- Abigail VanWieren – Campus Dining Services

10 Years

- Lorry Ekstrom – Residential Dining Service
- Kenneth Greenawalt – Building Services

15 Years

- Marsha Dodson – Grounds
- Alexandra Galindo – Center for Governmental Studies
- John Kearsing – DoIT-Admin-Business-Finance
- Annemarie Oeschlager – Libraries

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