



**Northern Illinois
University**

Northern Staff News

November 2024

niu.edu/operating-staff-council | osc@niu.edu

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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
tgipson1@niu.edu.

President's Corner



Greetings Operating Staff,

It is the end of October as I write this article, and the weather is still nice. Although it gets darker sooner, there is still plenty to do on campus and around town. We know we have a lot ahead of us this year, and it is great to be part of conversations with folks who are consistently thinking about how we can support our students through any challenging time and look for ways to help them

reduce stress. With that, the Recreation Center invited all NIU students to join free yoga classes each morning the week of Nov. 4. We had our relaxation and restore room open for any student and our recreation members to come and relax.



In the last article, I got the opportunity to stop by to see the greenhouses we have on campus. On Oct. 25, I attended Council of Councils at UIC and got to tour their greenhouses on campus. While their space is not as big as ours, they have maximized the space they have and even have a beehive. I was able to take some photos and hope I was able to capture the beauty of the space.

The theme of the all-day conference was "All Together Extraordinary." They talked about health and well-being, how to take care of yourself, how to know and set boundaries, and plan for your future. Yes, we heard about what is happening with Illinois state regarding funding and new laws to protect workers, regulations for using AI and additional protected rights for pregnant

employees. While hearing all that and going through some fabulous chair exercises, what stuck out to me was this quote by David Viscott, “Your ultimate goal in life is to become your best self. Your immediate goal is to get on the path that will lead you there.”

I encourage you to take a deep look at where you are now and where you want to be. It is OK if you do not know today, but you can start by writing down all the things that bring you joy. Then you can write all the things that you enjoy about your job and start from there. While we all know plans can and will change, it is still important to make them and evaluate where you are from time to time to ensure you are making progress.

While I was unable to make it to the Real Talk Conference on Oct. 25, I heard it was fantastic. There were tons of sessions that presented on real topics and gave you a glimpse into the lens of someone that is in that field or has dealt with that topic. As we look to become more inclusive and offer a campus where a sense of belonging is the culture, we must be open to change, or at least agree that anyone that makes a decision to get educated at our institution or decides to work here should be free to be themselves without fear of alienation, judgement or harm.

In my next article, I plan to take a trip over to the NIU art museum as it was recommended to me as hidden gem. If you know of another hidden gem, feel free to email it to me at osc@niu.edu. I look forward to visiting more places on campus.

As always, be sure to take care of yourself. Consider taking some time off when you are able, so you can relax, regroup and recharge (R3) to be ready for anything that may come your way.

Take good care,

Natasha Johnson

President, Operating Staff Council 2023-2025

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Give and You Shall Receive

As we approach the holidays, please remember there are several ways to give back to our NIU community. Consider donating today.

- [Donation to the Civil Service Emergency Fund.](#)
- [Donate to the Huskie Food Pantry.](#)
- [Donate to the Operating Staff Dependent Endowed Scholarship Fund.](#)

NIU Annuitants Association

The NIU Annuitants Association (Association) is one of 53 chapters of the State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA). Membership in SUAA is open to both current employees and retirees. It is the Association’s opinion that SUAA is the premier organization in the state of Illinois solely dedicated to promoting and protecting the interests of participants in the State Universities Retirement System.

SUAA has a record of success in protecting retiree benefits. SUAA, and others, successfully sued the state of Illinois in 2014 over legislation enacted to transfer the cost of health insurance to retirees and to diminish retirement benefits. The Illinois Supreme Court found both legislative acts to be unconstitutional. SUAA also led a successful campaign to defeat a constitutional amendment deemed to be detrimental to its members. And SUAA will be there to defend the current constitution’s “pension protection clause” in the event a constitutional convention is held at some time in the future.

Noted below are some of SUAA’s activities which are beneficial to its members:

- Issuing updates on legislation being considered in Springfield that affect its members.
- Testifying before legislative committees to provide balanced information when changes impacting its members are being considered.
- Networking with legislators to increase SUAA’s visibility and influence.
- Engaging lobbyists who work to advance SUAA’s legislative platform.
- Advocating for enhanced benefits for Tier II employees.

There are two other components of SUAA: SUAA Foundation and SUAAAction. The Foundation is organized as a not-for-profit charity which provides emergency and survivor assistance to members, offers scholarships to members and their children and grandchildren, and professional development grants to employee members. In 2023, a child and grandchild of members of our chapter each received a \$1,000 scholarship.

SUAAAction is a separate arm of SUAA providing members with the opportunity for grassroots campaigning and attending fundraisers. It makes donations to political campaigns and is funded by voluntary member contributions.

Our NIU chapter is run by a 13-member board of directors which includes both current employees and retirees. It functions through its 12 committees. In normal times, we hold two coffee hours each year, an annual meeting for all members and offer travel opportunities. A newsletter is published semiannually. NIU is the only chapter which has established an endowed scholarship. And the association has representatives on several university committees such as parking and benefits.

To judge SUAA's impact in Springfield, current NIU chapter board member Michael Fortner, a former member of the Illinois House of Representatives, was asked how SUAA is viewed by members of the general assembly. He said, "SUAA is highly regarded by legislators, and its position on issues before the legislature are given due consideration reflecting its reputation as an honest and fair voice on matters of retirement benefits and funding." He also noted that its physical presence in Springfield enhances its ability to have meaningful contact with legislators.

It is hoped this information will lead you to conclude that becoming a member of the association is in your best interests. At a cost of only \$1.75 per pay period, or \$42.00 per year, it is believed membership is the most cost-effective means you have to protect your retirement benefits.

Since there is strength in numbers, your support of SUAA is needed through your membership in the NIU Annuitants Association for all of us to continue to have an effective voice in Springfield on issues affecting SURS participants. Membership forms can be found on both the association's and SUAA web pages.

If you would like to join or auto renew using a debit/credit card, you can log in to suaa.org and select "Join or Renew Membership." Ensure the box is checked for the auto-renew option, or you can mail a check payable to SUAA.

More information can be found at the following websites:

NIU Annuitants Association: niu.edu/annuitants.

State University Annuitants Association: suaa.org.



Share Your OSC Lunch and Learn Topics

As a reminder, the OSC Public Relations committee would like your ideas about lunch and learn topics. They have come up with a few ideas and would like you to rate them on what you think would be of the most interest to you. They also ask if you have any ideas about topics of interest, and if you have expertise and/or knowledge about a subject and would like to present, please let them know.

In the survey form, there are three short sections. The first section is work-related topics, the second section is about your personal interests and the third section is for you to share additional information.

Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts and ideas by [filling out our form](#).

Please contact Karen Smith at ksmith12@niu.edu with any questions.

Where are the Notary Publics?

There are several notary publics on campus. If you need to have something notarized, we recommend you set up an appointment with one of the individuals listed on our [human resources website](#). To ensure availability, contact the notary public by phone or email. If you have a change or addition to the list, please email humanresources@niu.edu.

Holiday Gift Wrapping Fun

Join us for an [OSC Gift Wrapping in-person event](#) 3 to 4:30 p.m. Dec. 17, 2024, in the Heritage Room at the Holmes Student Center. Bring a gift to wrap, tape, scissors and ribbon. Wrapping paper will be supplied.

Let's celebrate! [RSVP by Friday, Dec. 13.](#)



Confessions of a Seasoned Huskie



Meet Theresa Stack, also known as Terry, who has been a program director — working title: associate director of special events/conferencing and event sales — for Conference and Event Services at NIU since March 16, 2014. With a love for event planning and a passion for NIU, Terry balances a busy work schedule while still finding time for family, adventure and self-improvement. Let's dive into her world!

Terry, what's the biggest misconception people have about your current position at NIU?

"People always tell me, 'Your job must be so much fun!' My job *is* fun, and I love it, but it's a lot of work. My average workday is 10 hours, and I work many six-day weeks. I'm constantly preparing for the next event, booking new business and

coordinating staff to work with departments throughout campus to make things happen. I spend a lot of time planning and preparing before the event occurs. The best part of my position is working with so many people across campus, meeting new people daily and talking a lot! I love the variety of my position and working with such a great team of people within my office. I'm thankful daily for all the campus departments that help support us! Our department coordinates all types of events, such as special occasions (weddings, anniversaries, birthday parties, funeral-related events, graduation parties, community fundraisers, etc.); corporate events (meetings, conferences, celebrations, fundraisers, etc.); NIU meetings and events; and special university occasions. I love the variety of work and the people I work with!"

I guess people forget that making events look flawless takes a lot more work behind the scenes!

If you could add one thing to your office, position, or department, what would it be and why?

"More trained staff to support events!"

Describe the one thing you will never do again.

"A high ropes challenge course climbing from tree to tree by rope. I may feel somewhat comfortable with heights, but I won't do that again!"

Sounds like a real-life Tarzan moment you'd prefer to leave in the past!

What has been the highlight for you this past week?

"Homecoming! I love all the scheduled festivities that bring our campus community together! With events happening throughout the week and something for everyone — employees, students, alumni, and community members — we gather and celebrate NIU! I'm always a proud Huskie, but Homecoming is my favorite (and busy) time."

What's the most spontaneous thing you've ever done?

"Tandem skydiving! Fabulous experience, and I would do it again. I was on vacation, and the friend I was traveling with and I both spontaneously decided to jump. I did it to help conquer my fear of heights."

What's at the top of your bucket list?

"Returning to New Zealand! I lived there for two months years ago and loved the country. I'd like to return with my family and travel to both islands. Equally at the top of my bucket list is to show my children and husband the places in Europe where my parents were born and lived before moving to the U.S."

What have you forgotten today?

"My lunch! I'm not very good at packing a daily lunch, so I eat a lot of CLIF bars and fruit."

I think we've all been there! CLIF bars to the rescue!

What tips can you share that helped you make it at NIU for all your years here?

"I first arrived in DeKalb as an NIU undergrad (living in Stevenson South 10A!), and years later returned as extra help and then full-time staff. My love for NIU stems from my great experiences as an undergrad, although I've had so many experiences in my career that keep me at NIU. The greatest tip I can offer is to get involved on campus and experience all that campus has to offer. Expand beyond your core daily work group and don't hesitate to volunteer on campus, attend a performance or join a committee. NIU has so much to offer."

What's the coolest thing (work, home, or hobby) you're working on right now?

"My MPA degree. I'm spending much of my free time working on the next degree and enjoying it all! And baking. I love to bake!"

Describe your favorite family tradition.

"Camping! I grew up camping with my family, and my sisters and I still gather our families for family camping trips. My husband and I camp with our children, and we still do backpacking trips. This past summer, my sister and I backpacked in the Wind River

Range, Wyoming, with our families. We still love primitive camping, and our family has backpacked in some awesome places around the country — our favorite is the Grand Canyon (I’ve backpacked it five times — four times with family).”

Where do you like to go on vacation?

“Anywhere in the Rocky Mountains, especially the Canadian Rockies. Or backpacking in the Grand Canyon. Or Houghton, Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula — camping with family in my tent.”

Describe your proudest accomplishment, work or personal.

“In 2023, I received the Presidential Award for Staff Excellence, which meant a great deal to me. I’m proud of my work helping to support NIU departments with their events and external clients, too. I’m most proud of helping to make a difference for our NIU community, and I couldn’t do it alone. I’m thankful for all the wonderful people on campus that I work with.”

What’s the most unusual place you’ve ever slept in?

“In a tent for three summers as a camp counselor during college. I went on to become the outdoor program and property director for the Fox Valley Girl Scout Council and operated their local Girl Scout camp for six years as full-time staff and was involved for seven more years as a volunteer chair while on their board. I’ve slept at the Girl Scout camp many times.”

Well, that’s all the time we have for now. Thanks so much, Terry, for bringing us into your world and sharing your experiences.

If you’d like to share your own experiences with the rest of the staff, feel free to contact me anytime at tgipson1@niu.edu.

This article was written with support from ChatGPT.

Employment Changes

September 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Braden Graff, Main Desk Attendant – Holmes Student Center
- Alicia Graham, Program Services Specialist – Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault
- Sara Lenz, Office Administrator – Curriculum and Instruction
- Peter Matthiscyk II, Locksmith – Physical Plant
- Maria Muniz, Community Outreach Worker – P-20 Center
- Patrick Murphy, Sports Facilities Manager – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Sierra Price, Marketing Associate – Outreach, Engagement, and Regional Development Marketing and Messaging
- Stephanie Robinson, Culinary Worker III – Lorado Taft Operations
- Camyle Tate, Program/Student Advisor – Academic Advising Center
- Hicela Woods, Program/Student Advisor – Academic Advising Center

Retirements

- Janet Danekas, Culinary Worker I – Residential Dining Service
- Thomas Harris Sr., Storekeeper III – Holmes Student Center
- Daniellle Schultz, Internal Auditor Manager – Internal Audit
- Sandra Stockwell, Catering Supervisor – Conferences Event Management

Separations

- Seham Ataullah, Business/Administrative Associate – Housing and Residential Services
- Noah Brooks, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Susana Das Neves, Program Director – P-20 Center
- Jennifer Ferris, Grants and Contracts Associate – Sponsored Programs Administration
- Todd Fletcher, Senior Laboratory Mechanic – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Robert Mills, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Alexandria Rangel, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Darious Reed, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Michael Ramirez II, Building Service Worker – Building Services

October 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Jessica Arteaga, Program Coordinator – P-20 Center
- Brandon Dai, IT Technical Associate – University Marketing
- Travis Dennis, Culinary Worker III – Residential Dining Service
- Richard Echevarria, Program Coordinator – Family and Consumer Sciences
- Nathan Feliciano, Assistant Laboratory Mechanic – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Karyn Garland, Office Support Specialist – Computer Science
- Michael Hash, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Braden Hunley, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Rebecca Iaccino, Office Administrator – Public Administration
- Brendan Kerschke, Snack Bar Attendant – Residential Dining Service
- Jack Miller, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Paul Miller, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Claudia Oyarce Nunez, Distribution Clerk – Campus Dining Service
- Nicholas Person, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Ellen Pettit, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Joseph Potter, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Elisa Ramos, Accounting Assistant – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Teresa Ricketts, Admissions and Records Assistant – Admissions Tours and Events
- Marcus Roberson, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Campus Dining Service
- Rubiosa Shavit, Culinary Worker II – Residential Dining Service
- Jessica Smothers, Office Manager – Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations
- Elexa Stewart, Culinary Worker II – Residential Dining Service
- Michael Yndestad, Office Administrator – Transportation
- Nicole Zurita, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center

Retirements

- James Barry, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Clifford Benson, Facility Operations Coordinator – Libraries
- Michael Dreyer, Food Service Administrator II – Residential Dining Service
- MaryJayne Holley, Administrative Assistant – Alumni Services
- Cynthia Meeks, Service Enterprises Manager – Holmes Student Center
- Mary Riggs, Housing Officer – Housing and Residential Services
- Clifton Stiles, Events Administrator Associate – Holmes Student Center

Separations

- Antoinette Binder, Retail Manager – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Mownica Ghanta, IT Technical Associate – Report Cards
- Tara Kristoff, Program Director – Diversity and Equity
- Sophie Penniman, Program Coordinator – Libraries
- Burim Ramadani, Program Coordinator – College of Business
- Damarco Smith, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Shelby Tomassini, Office Support Specialist – Communication
- Kyle Wallace, Program/Student Advisor – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Nicholas Wotruba, Mailing Equipment Operator/Expediter II – Materials Management
- Sarah Yaeger, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Campus Dining Service

Service Awards

September 2024

5 Years

- Ann Galletta – Residential Dining Service
- Julia Garcia-Martinez – Public Safety
- Brandon Goff – Housing and residential Services
- Vincent Margiotta – Physical Plant
- Oliverio Medoza – Campus Dining Service
- Katherine Owen – Campus Dining Service
- Jonathan Sall – Institutional Communications
- Spencer Tritt – Northern Public Radio
- Jacquelyn Valdes – Campus Dining Service
- Corie Wild – Earth Atmosphere and Environment

10 Years

- Joshua Anderson – Visual and Performing Arts External Programming
- Ching Kit Elvin Chan – Accounts Payable and Travel
- Benjamin Engh – Development Operations
- Michael Tweed – University Marketing

15 Years

- Kristin Brynteson – P-20 Center

20 Years

- Robert Botts – Bursar
- Donnis Briscoe – Center for Child Welfare and Education
- Kristina Ross – Accountancy

25 Years

- Lesley Gilbert – Human Resource Services
- Joshua Klassen – Building Services
- Marzena Szmydt – Student Involvement and Leadership development
- Dale Thurman – Integrated Media Technologies

30 Years

- Samuel Collin – Building Services
- Renee Page – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

October 2024

5 Years

- Asante Alveraz – Holmes Student Center
- Marcus Applewhite – Housing and Residential Services
- Tamara Boston – Chief Diversity Officer
- Christopher Ebert – Heatin Plant
- Megan Holt – Center for Innovative Teaching Learning
- Robert Kerschke Jr. – Residential Dining Service
- Ashley Lupton – Bursar
- Frank Tornabene Jr. – Physical Plant

10 Years

- Margaret Burnham – Campus Dining Service
- Casey Coots – Graduate School
- Rachel Jurs-Lauderdale – DoIT-Admin-Business-Finance
- Joshua Schwartz – Earth Atmosphere and Environment
- Elizabeth Yee – College of Health and Human Sciences

15 Years

- Steven Squier – Registration and Records

20 Years

- Scott Betts – Heating Plant
- Howard Burgett – Building Services
- Hussul Greer – Building Services
- Elizabeth Harvey – Building Services
- Andrew Peccarelli – Building Services

25 Years

- John Alamia – Heating Plant
- Mark McGowan – Office of Institutional Communication
- Irene Sanderson – Application Services

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