



Northern Illinois
University

Northern Staff News

September 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



Welcome to fall 2024! I enjoy this time of year. Welcoming our students back to campus with our Week of Welcome events is always a highlight of the year. I hope you had the opportunity to welcome a fellow Huskie and take part in some of the many activities.

This past month, I got the opportunity to stop by to see Craig Schultz, who oversees the greenhouses on campus. If you have not been, I invite you to go over to Montgomery Hall, office 213, to see the many plants and greenery that NIU has. I plan to take my staff over to see these amazing plants. I often wonder, "What is the best way to get information out?" Then I thought I would write about it in this article in hopes of shedding light to the many hidden gems that we have on campus.

I hope we will be able to partner with the biological sciences department to bring some plants over to the Recreation Center's Relaxation and Restore Room or maybe even put up some photos and change them out throughout the year. I hope that we all begin to venture out of our spaces and see what we can do to collaborate and shed light on space we don't normally see.



If you know of any hidden gems across campus, feel free to email it to me at osc@niu.edu. I look forward to getting out more to see all that campus has to offer.

To be effective as the leadership team, we need to hear from you. Please take a moment and complete our [2024-2025 OSC Priorities Survey](#), so we can be sure to best represent you in the things that matter to you. This survey is open until Monday, Nov. 4.

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
njohnson11@niu.edu osc@niu.edu

Civil Service Emergency Fund

Please consider helping your fellow Huskies. This emergency fund was created to assist full-time, status, civil service employees who are facing economic crisis.

Those who are able may choose to give in several ways:

- You may donate online via the NIU Foundation website by selecting the Civil Service Emergency Fund in the "Click here to search available designations" dropdown.
- You may send a check, with "Civil Service Emergency Fund" written on the memo line, to:
Northern Illinois University Foundation
Altgeld Hall 138
DeKalb, IL 60115-2882
- You may set up a payroll deduction by filling out the form, prefilled for the Civil Service Emergency Fund and returning it to the NIU Foundation, Altgeld Hall 138.

Any amount you can give would be greatly cherished.

For further information please contact them via email at cs-fund@niu.edu. You may also visit the [Civil Service Emergency Fund website](#) for more information.

FAFSA Reminder

The Department of Education announced Aug. 7, 2024, that the 2025-2026 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form will be available to all students and contributors around Dec. 1, 2024.

If you have students inquiring regarding an Oct. 1 availability, please be aware that the Department of Education will release the FAFSA form for testing starting Oct. 1 to a limited number of students and institutions. They hope to use the feedback from these students and institutions to test and resolve any issues prior to the full release around Dec. 1, 2024.

For questions, please direct them to NIU's Student Financial Advising Services Team or visit the [Student Financial Advising website](#).

Need Help? Reach out to 211

Kishwaukee United Way is promoting and supporting the 211 nonemergency system that helps put you in touch with organizations ready to help you with many needs and resources and to connect you to services in the area that you reside in. You can get assistance in many areas such as mortgage assistance, help filing taxes, help finding food and shelter, and resources for health needs. You may reach the hotline by sending a text message to 898-211, dialing 2-1-1 or calling 888-865-9903 to speak with a representative. This service is strictly confidential and is available 24/7.

For more information, please visit one of the websites below:

- Illinois residents: 211illinois.org.
- Nationwide residents: 211.org.

Office of Employee Well-being Fall 2024 Learning Opportunities Series

The Office of Employee Well-being is pleased to announce their fall 2024 Learning Opportunities series, which is now posted online and open for registration. They will be offering virtual and a few in-person training sessions. They will also be hosting several in-person group events.

New this fall, they will offer a creative lunch hour two times a month for employees to spend time networking and being creative with each other. Please view the [university calendar](#) for more details. They will continue to add additional trainings and events over the course of the semester, so if you are not on their department mailing list and want to receive the copy of the training flyer or information about their other events, please contact their office at EmployeeAssistance@niu.edu and ask to be added to their email list.

To learn more about all their learning opportunities for this fall, please visit the [Employee Well-being website](#) or call 815-753-9191. To see the full lineup of trainings and programs or to register to attend, go to go.niu.edu/campus-training.

If you are an employee interested in any of the training or activities, **please register with their office in advance of the event.** This will allow their office time to add you to the registration lists so that they can provide you with all the necessary session details prior to the scheduled event.

DoIT Workshops

Have you always wanted to beef up your skills in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams or Outlook? Well, your day has come! DoIT is offering workshops this fall semester on many of the Microsoft products we use every day. For more information on the upcoming workshops, please visit the [DoIT registration website](#).

Upcoming Fall Compliance Trainings

Be on the lookout for emails and announcements about upcoming trainings on ethics and sexual harassment, IT security and sexual misconduct. Emails will be sent out informing us when the training period will begin and end. All employees are required to complete the three trainings unless they are on an approved, full-time FMLA, military or illness leave during the training period.

Do you know?

The State of Illinois Benefit Program offers many special services to you.

- **Flu Shots:** The state pays for employees who are on any of the state insurance plans. This year's NIU flu clinic will be held 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 23, in the Holmes Student Center Duke Ellington Ballroom. Information for booking an appointment time and required forms to fill out will be coming soon.
- **Smoking Cessation Program:** Members and their enrolled dependents are eligible to receive a maximum \$200 rebate upon completion of an approved [Smoking Cessation Program](#).
- **Weight-loss Benefit:** Employees are eligible to receive a maximum \$200 rebate toward the cost of an [approved weight-loss program](#) once in every three plan years.

Confessions of a Seasoned Huskie

Seasoned Huskie: Cathy Dancey
Department: Academic Advising Center
Title: Office Support Specialist
Hire Date: April 2017

With a passion for helping students and a love for adventure, Cathy brings a unique perspective to her role at NIU. Let's dive into her world and see what makes her tick (spoiler: It involves comfy clothes and no cooking).

Cathy, what's one thing you'd love to add to your department?

"More space for my department, our team and the students we serve. When I began with the AAC, we were a staff of four working remotely due to COVID-19. Now we have a staff of nearly 20, and we just need more room."

So, basically, you'd like a real-life game of Tetris but with desks and filing cabinets? Noted!

What's been the highlight of your week?

"Seeing the students return to campus! This first week of classes has been a busy one for our office — students looking to add/drop, etc. We have seen a total of 186 walk-in students — it has been busy but fun!"

Ah, the hustle and bustle of back-to-school chaos — where we pretend we have our lives together and hope the students don't notice.

What is at the top of your bucket list?

“Travel. Seeing as many places as possible. Tied at the top are Machu Picchu and the Nazca Lines in Peru and a Nile River cruise to see the ancient sites in Egypt.”

Machu Picchu and the Nile? You’re setting the bar high. I was thinking more along the lines of making it through a whole season of a show without falling asleep.

What movie completely scarred you for life?

“‘The Silence of the Lambs.’ I don’t know how anyone has ever watched that without being scarred.”

Oh, absolutely. I still can’t look at fava beans the same way.

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

“Make connections with other staff members on campus. Learn who knows what, who does what and who can help when you are looking to assist students and staff to avoid the dreaded Huskie Shuffle.”

Navigating NIU is like playing an elaborate game of Clue, and Cathy knows exactly which room to find Professor Plum and the candlestick.

What was the best concert you’ve ever attended?

“Every Dave Matthews Band concert that I have been to has been the best. Although seeing Sting in Toronto last year was amazing too!”

I mean, how can you go wrong with Dave Matthews? Throw in a little Sting, and you’ve basically covered the musical bucket list.

What makes you laugh?

“Game nights around the kitchen table with friends and family. And dry humor — love Nate Bargatze.”

There’s nothing like a good game night to bring out the competitive side of family — and maybe some well-timed passive aggression.

Describe your favorite family tradition.

“At Christmastime, our tabletop nativity scene becomes a reverse advent calendar of sorts. Beginning December 1, a small miniature figurine or toy from around the house finds its way to the manger. Past visitors have included E.T., a plastic woolly mammoth, Boba Fett from ‘Star Wars,’ a T-Rex, a mini panda bear, a carved wooden sailor, a few Barbies and so on. By Christmas Day, there are 24 visitors to celebrate Jesus’ birth.”

So, a manger full of unlikely guests. I’d love to see the look on Mary’s face when Boba Fett shows up with the T-Rex.

Living or dead, what individuals would you like to share a meal with?

“I would like to have dinner with my four grandparents — all were born between 1908 and 1920 and had all passed before I realized how much I would love to hear their stories about living through the Roaring ’20s, the Great Depression and World War II. Would need to be a very leisurely meal with at least seven courses so we would have as much time as possible together.”

Seven courses and family stories? That sounds like the ultimate dinner party — sign me up!

Where do you like to go on vacation?

“To vacation, we usually go to Florida. We have family in both Bradenton and Orlando, so visiting with them is always relaxing with time on the beach, by the pool or at Disney parks. Alternatively, we do like to travel, spending our time exploring new places, countries and cities. We traveled this past February to Utsjoki, Finland, to see the northern lights. While there, we had the opportunity to drive our own dog sleds in Tana, Norway. We also spent time exploring Stockholm, Sweden, and visiting the ABBA museum, among other things. Interestingly, I met two NIU alumni on that trip — one was in our group in Utsjoki and the other in a restaurant in Stockholm. Small world, really.”

From Disney parks to dog sledding in Norway — sounds like Cathy’s vacations are way more interesting than mine (does the grocery store count as a trip?).

Describe your proudest (work or personal) accomplishment.

“Raising great kids! I have two adult children — a son (28) and a daughter (22). I am so amazed by them both and the things they have achieved so far. I’m excited to be a spectator to their lives and to see them find their way!”

Parenting is the ultimate adventure — way more impressive than any Machu Picchu hike!

If you could do anything for a day and money is no object, what would you do?

“I would take the longest possible flight on an A380 aircraft in first class. Singapore Airlines would be amazing, but any carrier with the A380 would do. If you aren’t sure about the A380, Google it. It is amazing!”

First class on an A380? Now that’s how you turn a long flight into a dream vacation.

How do you show kindness to others?

“I am a helper by nature, so any time I can help make someone’s day easier, I will.”

Cathy’s the kind of person you want around when life gets messy — she’s got a knack for making things better.

If you had a warning label, what would it say?

“Easily distracted and prone to interrupt (before thoughts/ideas are lost forever).”

I think we all need that label — otherwise, our best ideas would be forever lost to the abyss of daydreams and forgotten grocery lists.

Thank you, Cathy, for sharing your stories and insights!

If you’re inspired to be our next seasoned Huskie or rookie, please reach out to me at tgipson1@niu.edu. I’d love to hear your confessions!

This article was written with support from ChatGPT.

Employment Changes

July 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Michelle Anderson, Accounting Specialist – Development Administration
- Steven Byers, Steam and Power Plant I – Heating Plant
- Sage Figueroa, Steam and Power Plant I – Heating Plant
- Sarah George, Office Manager – College of Education
- Austin Johnson, Office Support Associate – Illinois Board of Examiners
- Jason Michalowski, IT Support Associate – College of Education
- Andrew Nicol, Police Telecommunicator – Public Safety
- Victoria Peterson, Program Coordinator – Huskie Academic Support Center
- Cherena Pollard, Program/Student Advisor – CHANCE Program
- Antonio Proscia, Community Outreach Worker – P-20 Center
- Jessica Savage, Radio TV Producer Announcer I – Northern Public Radio
- John Schlieben, Program Coordinator – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Madelyn Vaynerman, Marketing Associate – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Joseph Winters, Office Support Associate – IL Board of Examiners

Retirement

- Frank Bell, Program/Student Advisor – History
- Pamela Roesner, Office Manager – Human Resource Services

Separations

- Amanda Baum, Program Coordinator – College of Education
- Rene Camarena, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Sarah Cortinas, Administrative Assistant – College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
- Karina Diaz, Financial Aid Coordinator – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office
- Bethany Grim, Office Administrator – Public Administration
- Nathaniel Hansen, Distributions Clerk – Campus Dining Service
- Virginia Huber, Accounting Assistant – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Joseph Potter, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Julianne Snow, Police Telecommunicator – Public Safety
- Mercedes Westmorland, Child Development Associate – Child Development and Family Center

August 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Stanley Anukwuocha, Office Support Specialist – Northern Illinois Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- Seham Atallah, Business/Administrative Associate – Housing and Residential Services
- Chelsie Baker, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Faizan Baksh, Internal Auditor – Internal Audit
- Lewis Barrett, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Taylor Bartscher, Child Development Associate – Child Development and Family Center
- Harold Bell, Financial Aid Coordinator – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office
- Antoinette Binder, Retail Manager – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Cynthia Busby, Interpreter for the Deaf – Disability Research Center
- Jeremy Butler, Program Coordinator – Kinesiology and Physical Education
- Caitlin Cheatham, Office Manager – Communication
- Amy Cho, Office Manager – College of Law
- Dustin Davis, Marketing Associate – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Tommie Easterling, Snack Bar Attendant – Campus Dining Service
- Gina Garcia, Administrative Aide – Center for Child Welfare and Education
- Amber Giffin, Program Assistant – Chief Diversity Officer
- Rachel Giosta, IT Support Associate – Infrastructure Services
- Shealyn Hargreaves, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- Robert Knigge, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Tara Kristoff, Program Director – Diversity and Equity
- David Leija, Program/Student Advisor – Academic Advising Center
- Jessica Milan, Financial Aid Coordinator – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office
- Ana Moreno, Office Manager – Educational Technology and Research Assessment
- Jesus Nicacio, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Hyunju Palmer, Snack Bar Attendant – Campus Dining Service
- Omar Ramirez, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Tracy Ringle, Program Coordinator – University Recreation and Wellness
- Martha Robinson, Storekeeper II – Residential Dining Service
- Andrew Rodriguez, Program/Student Advisor – Management
- Osvaldo Salazar, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Debra Simpson, Program/Student Advisor – Academic Advising Center
- Olin Simpson, Accounting Assistant – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Jennifer Smith, Office Administrator – Research Compliance, Integrity and Safety
- Veronica Storc, Tool Room Supervisor – School of Art and Design
- Melissa West, Office Manager – Marketing
- Jared Wilkinson, IT Support Associate – Libraries
- Eric Witzel, IT Support Associate – Infrastructure Services

Retirement

- Richard Scott, Police Officer – Public Safety

Separations

- Tommie Easterling, Snack Bar Attendant – Campus Dining Service
- Jennifer Gohring, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- Nicholas Janssen, Snack Bar Attendant – Campus Dining Service
- Linda Johnson, Business/Administrative Associate – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Edan Liu, Accounting Associate – Controller
- Cynthia Lund, Accounting Officer – Accounts Payable and Travel
- Ryan Mai-Do, Marketing Associate – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Robin Meier, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Campus Dining Service
- Natalie Retrigue, Office Support Associate – Psychology
- Melissa West, Office Manager – Marketing

Service Awards

July 2024

5 Years

- Aiden Ethington – Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault
- Veronica Jackson – Child Development and Family Center
- Emily Payne – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Melissa Perez Romero – Child Development and Family Center
- Christopher Tessarolo – Infrastructure Services
- Brenda Woolbright – Building Services

10 Years

- Kelsey Johnson – DoIT-Admin-Business-Finance
- Mariann O'Malley – Development Administration

15 Years

- Ashutosh Aloor – Application Services
- Lorraine Propheter – University Marketing

20 Years

- Catherine Watson – Bursar
- Passion Williamson-Bandele – College of Health and Human Sciences

25 Years

- Diane Alberts – Center of Innovative Teaching and Learning
- Courtney Harms – College of Business
- Karen Smith – Human Resource Services

30 Years

- Douglas Ball – Integrated Media Technologies
- Patricia Erickson – University Council

35 Years

- Janene Boyer – Child Development and Family Center

August 2024

5 Years

- Gaytha Adams – Residential Dining Service
- Kelly Black – College of Visual and Performing Arts
- Ashton Calvin Dsouza – Testing Services
- Jacob DaSilva – Gift Planning
- Allyn Davis – Housing and Residential Services
- Christy DeLair – Anthropology
- Mark Hankins – Innovation
- Aubrey Hense – Counseling and Consultation Services
- Karen Mantz – World Language and Culture
- Manjari Mishra – Biological Sciences
- Brian Morrison – Grounds
- Swetha Palakoti – Report Cards
- Donee Spizzirri – College of Visual and Performing Arts
- Taylor Weinheimer – Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault

10 Years

- Jessica Brown – Residential Dining Service
- Denise Burchard – Public Administration
- Justin Caballero – Residential Dining Service
- Beata Esparza – Building Services
- Bryan Flower – Innovation
- Carlos Garcia – Nursing
- Prashantha Gurrula – Application Services
- Timothy Lange – Heating Plant

- Sarah Leis – Decision Support Analysis
- Sara Lyons – Nursing
- Paula Meyer – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Reinhard Miller – Lorado Taft Operations
- Daniel Rogness – Computer Science
- Jeffrey Salmon – Off-Campus and Non-Traditional Student Services
- Luis Santos-Rivas – Latino Resource Center
- Mark Schabacker – Building Services
- Craig Schultz – Biological Sciences
- Denise White – Child Development and Family Center

15 Years

- Kristie Crane – Sociology

20 Years

- Edward Heard – Career Services
- Richard Mathesius – Heating Plant

25 Years

- Melinda Davis – Philosophy
- Dawn Galbreath – English
- Stephanie Kummerer – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Yasmina Sefiane – Center for Child Welfare and Education
- Clinton Strever – Building Services

30 Years

- Judy Dreska – Application Services
- Maryann Lalowski – Communication

35 Years

- Donna Martin – Sponsored Programs Administration

45 Years

- Ellen Franklin – English

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