



Northern Illinois
University

Northern Staff News

January 2025

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



Happy New Year!

I hope you all were able to enjoy the holidays and a well-deserved break, and have been enjoying this weather as it has certainly been good for this time of year.

As we say goodbye to 2024, we as a university still have quite the road ahead of us. While the budget deficit is still upon us, we are hopeful that the strategies implemented will not only help rightsize

the budget deficit, but also put us in a position where this will soon be a thing of the past.

There are times when we must look forward, but there are also times when we must look back to make sure history does not repeat itself. One thing I have learned is when your back is against the wall, you have the best chance for growth and learning as failure is not an option. These are the moments when we think outside of the box, produce some great actionable items and move forward. We work for a great institution and many of you have worked here for decades, so that alone is a testament of how dedicated you are to this institution.

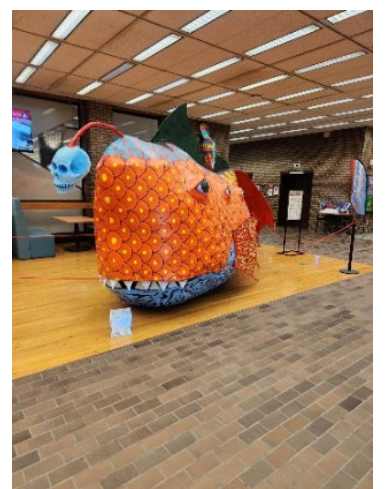
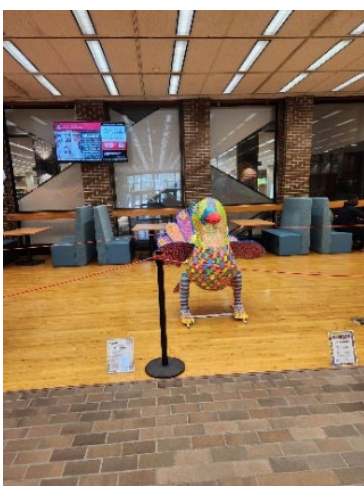
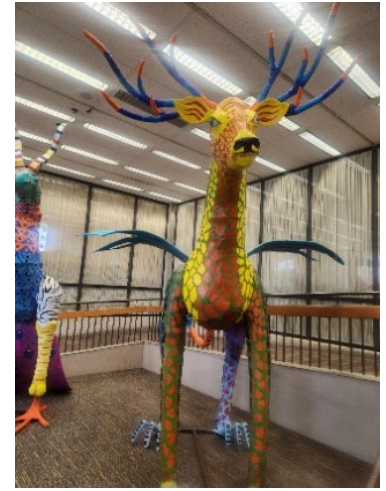
The new [budget website](#) has launched. This is the first phase of the website, so check back often for more information.

Our Operating Staff Council is looking forward to creating some professional development opportunities for staff. We understand that budgets are still tight, so we are getting creative in how we think about professional development, and we want your input. Please take the time to [complete our survey](#) so we can know what types of professional development will best meet your needs.

I encourage you to attend our upcoming OSC meetings Feb. 6, March 6 and April 3. Our meetings are at 9 a.m. the first Thursday of every month. The presenters are Sean Frazier, VP of Athletics and Recreation; Clint-Michael Reneau, VP of Student Affairs; and Carol Sumner, VP of DEI and chief diversity officer, respectively. This is a wonderful time to ask any questions that you may have for any of them. All the meetings are currently hybrid, so it makes it easier than ever to join.

Here's to 2025, a year when we tap into cost-saving strategies, increase our revenue streams and use the great human capital we have here on campus.

On a lighter note, I was able to catch the Alebrijes: Magical Beings exhibit that was displayed in the Founders Memorial Library last semester. I hope you enjoy the pictures I took during that time. If you would like [more information about this exhibit](#), you can check it out on the NIU Calendar.



I wish you all a successful start to the spring semester.

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.

Stronger together,

Natasha Johnson

President, Operating Staff Council 2023-2025

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StaffFest

You are special and appreciated. The Operating Staff and Supportive Professional Staff Councils are hosting “StaffFest” (formally known as the Civil Service Celebration) from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 12 in the Holmes Student Center Ballroom. Our Operating Staff Council is joining together with the Supportive Professional Staff Council for this wonderful event. Mark your calendar now to join us for this special event. Registration will open soon for this event. We are bringing back the famous cake walk and tricycle races. You will be given release time for this appreciation event. The deadline to register is Feb. 22.

DoIT Professional Development Opportunities

Did you make a New Year’s resolution to prove yourself and your skills? The Division of Information Technology (DoIT) has just what you need to improve those skills. DoIT is offering IT workshops in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SharePoint, OneNote, Planner and more.

Register now for IT workshops

If you are looking to work with your department on a specific topic, DoIT can do this as well. Please contact Cindy Kozumplik, business analyst, at ckozumplik@niu.edu for more information.

New Office of the President Staff Fellow

Congratulations to our newest 2025 Staff Fellow, [Holly Nicholson](#)!

For more information about this position, please visit the [Office of the President website](#).

License Plates

Do you know that you could get personalized license plates with NIU on them? Not only do they look really cool, but part of the money goes toward supporting scholarships for Illinois student residents. Find out more on the [Secretary of State website](#).



Confessions of a Seasoned Huskie



Meet Renee Page, administrative assistant in the CLAS Dean's Office since Sept. 24, 1994. With 30 years at NIU, Page's journey is a testament to adaptability, hard work and an enduring love for the NIU community. Let's dive into her story.

Renee, how did you end up working at NIU?

I had been laid off from my previous job for a few months. I was interviewing for anything and everything. I interviewed with VPA External Programs, and by the time I got home, the director had called to let me know she planned to offer me the job. I promised to stay at least a year — that was 30 years ago.

What a lucky hire for NIU — 30 years and counting! How many positions have you held at NIU, and why or why didn't you switch?

I've held two positions. In my position in CVPA, I was able to take on more duties and move up in that position. I really loved working with the Community School of the Arts and the summer arts camps because I love music and theater. After 17 years, I decided I needed a change, even though anyone who knows me knows I'm a creature of habit. I was offered the admin position in the CLAS Dean's Office, and I have never regretted making the move. I've considered applying for other positions, but I'm pretty happy where I am. However, I don't necessarily advise people to do what I did, as I skipped over levels on the secretarial line, which left my salary lower than that of people who had moved up one level at a time.

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

My friend and I were traveling in Maine, and at the spur of the moment, we decided to take the Super Ferry from Bar Harbor to Nova Scotia. It was a four-hour trip each way for us to spend two hours in that province, but it was worth it! It's a beautiful area, and I'd love to go back.

Four hours each way for just two hours? Now that's dedication to adventure! What's at the top of your bucket list?

I really want to go to Australia and stop in a few different places around the country, like Uluru, Kakadu National Park and the Great Barrier Reef. I'm fascinated by the history and cultures of that country.

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

Be flexible. The one thing you can be certain of at NIU is that things will change, whether it's a new boss, new procedures, new software or new coworkers. You can have some time to come to terms with it, but change will come no matter whether you want it or not. Sometimes the changes are great, sometimes they are not so good, and sometimes it just doesn't work out, but you have to be able to go with the flow and work through it.

What do you do after a stressful day at work?

What I should do is go to the gym. What I usually do is put on my comfiest clothes and escape into a book for an hour or two. Chocolate is usually included.

Sounds like the perfect recipe for stress relief to me! Where do you like to go on vacation?

Everywhere and anywhere. I've been to 49 states and five countries. I can't wait for retirement next year so I have more time to get out and see the world.

And what do you do there?

We enjoy hiking, kayaking, and visiting national parks and monuments. We try to find unique things to do as well. We've gone snorkeling with the stingrays, whale watching, dog sledding and kayaking with manatees. One time, we doubled back on a vacation so we could go to an amethyst mine in Canada and dig through the trailings.

Describe your proudest (work or personal) accomplishment.

My proudest work accomplishment was receiving the Board of Trustees Staff Award last year. It was truly an honor to have the university acknowledge my years of hard work.

What's your favorite recipe or the recipe you're known for?

I love cooking and do volunteer work for Taste of Home magazine. My current favorite recipe is one-pot rotini with tomato cream sauce. However, the recipe I'm known for is Bloody Mary pot roast, cooked in an instant pot. The recipe won third place in a Taste of Home contest.

Very nice! Those recipes sound delicious. Cooking is such a great talent. Thanks again for taking the time to tell us about yourself. We have such wonderful employees here with a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

Contact me at tgipson1@niu.edu if you'd like to be our next seasoned Huskie interviewee.

This article was written with support from ChatGPT.

Employment Changes

November 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Jason Bishoff, Program Coordinator – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Margaret Clements, Office Manager – English
- Michael Genslinger, Distribution Clerk – Campus Dining Service
- Vasiliki Gerentes, Program Director – Student Involvement and Leadership Development
- Bruce Halverson, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Amanda Kraatz, Financial Aid Coordinator – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office
- Michael Lampley, Human Resource Representative – Human Resource Services
- Reilly Lyons, Food Court/Snack Bar Attendant – Residential Dining Service
- Rebecca Matthiscyk, Accounting Officer – Accounts Payable and Travel
- Lydia Nickels, Assistant Director Alumni Relations – College of Law
- Benjamin Spears, Administrative Aide – College of Health and Human Sciences
- William Turner II, Manager of Sports Facilities – Intercollegiate Athletics

Retirements

- Richard White, Carpenter – Physical Plant

Separations

- Nicholas DiGiulio, Events Coordinator – Holmes Student Center
- Meghan Escamilla, Program Coordinator – Alumni Services
- JaNiya Flowers, Security Guard – Public Safety
- Treveon Freeman, Program Assistant – Orientation and Family Connections
- Logan Halstead, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Adam Klassen, Building Service Foreman – Building Services
- Stephanie Robinson, Culinary Worker III – Lorado Taft Operations
- Andrew Rodriguez, Program/Student Advisor – Management
- Madelyn Vaynerman, Marketing Associate – Intercollegiate Athletics

December 2024

Welcome New Employees

- Joseph Basile, Police Officer – Public Safety
- James Cipra, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Kiaan Gor, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Rodger Gunn, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Residential Dining Service
- Iona Leeson, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Izaih Marquez, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Patricia Myers, Administrative Aide – College of Business
- Farouk Olayiwola, Program Coordinator – Center for Black Studies
- Lucas Ortegel, Emergency Management Coordinator – Public Safety
- Cecilli Rybicki, Human Resource Representative – Human Resource Services
- Sharon Tornabene, Food Court/Snack Bar Supervisor – Residential Dining Service
- Danielle Wall, Office Manager – Residential Dining Service

Deaths

- Joseph Reilly, Senior Library Specialist – Libraries
- Kristina Ross, Office Support Associate – Accountancy

Retirements

- David Holliday, Superintendent of Grounds – Grounds
- Lori Judkins, Office Support Specialist – Biological Sciences

Separations

- Jason Bishoff, Program Coordinator – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Nathan Buchanan, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Alyssa Parker, Extension Program Coordinator – Lorado Taft Operations
- Vivian Seki, Program Assistant – Disability Resource Center

Service Awards

November 2024

5 Years

- Jonathan Dehn – Residential Dining Service
- Elizabeth Garcia Ramirez – Sponsored Programs Administration
- Drew Halstead – Building Services
- Brenden Lennergard – Building Services
- Latisha Newman – Student Affairs Central
- Michael Ortegel – Public Safety
- Maribeth Voss – Vice President International Affairs

10 Years

- Matthew Brendich – Alumni Services
- Thomas Hapeman – Infrastructure Services
- Natasha Johnson – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Stephen Weiss – Bursar

15 Years

- William Hertzner – Libraries
- Brandon Lagana – Vice Provost

20 Years

- Christopher Samples – Facilities Management

25 Years

- Keenon Darlinger – Materials Management
- Tammy Klavenga – Housing and Residential Services
- Michale Olenek – Application Services
- Ellen Smith – Sponsored Programs Administration

30 Years

- Susan Stephens – Northern Public Radio

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5 Years

- Lindsey Komes – College of Education
- Suzanne Tennant – Office of Institutional Communication

10 Years

- Sara Finnigan – Holmes Student Center

25 Years

- Katharine Dempsey – Integrated Media Technologies
- Jennifer Ridge – School of Interdisciplinary Health Professions
- Mary Strub – Center for Governmental Studies

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