



Northern Illinois
University

Northern Staff News

March/April 2025

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

Table of Contents

President's Corner.....	1
New HRS Professional Development Opportunities.....	2
Employee Well-being Professional Development Opportunities.....	2
NIU Health and Wellness Fair.....	2
DoIT series: Microsoft Office Products.....	3
Confessions of a Seasoned Huskie.....	3
Employment Changes.....	5
Service Awards.....	7

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.

I hope you all were able to enjoy the start of the spring semester as we are halfway through.

As you know, we as a university are working through several variables to make sure the institution is strong and financially stable for many years to come. Mitigation strategies have been presented at shared governance meetings, and we are on the right track and divisions are

doing what they can to help. This includes holding off on the things that can wait and looking for ways to increase revenues where we can.

I want to share some news that while I thoroughly enjoy being in shared governance and leading the Operating Staff Council as president, I will not be seeking another term anytime soon. In the last article I talked about how we all at some point will have to make some tough decisions. Given the temporary state we are in, for me, it is this. In July, I was promoted in my day-to-day job (I know; people forget we have actual jobs, but I assure you we do), and there are some vacancies. And I'm restructuring my time that is very limited these days. But I am excited to see what is next for OSC, including the new leader. Sometimes it's good to have fresh eyes, thoughts and views on the council. With that, the OSC will be having elections next month. I encourage you to get involved if you have the time to do so. There is nothing like having a seat at the table and being heard.

I now want to take some time to thank a few people. I will say collaborating with Supportive Professional Staff President, Felicia Bohanon and Faculty Senate President Ben Creed has been joyful. They are both very passionate about shared governance and lead with integrity and look out for every working group we have, including our students. I know they will both welcome the new leader's thoughts and ideas just as they have done with me.

Thank you to President Lisa Freeman, Vice President Sean Frazier, Chief Strategist Matt Streb, CFO Middlemist, Provost Ellish-Piper and the Board of Trustees for including my voice and welcoming me in my role. It has allowed me to be comfortable and confident in speaking up when needed.

I could not have done the level of leading I have without the help of Francis Mitchell; she is so knowledgeable and incredibly helpful. Pat Erickson has also been extremely helpful in keeping us reminded of many meetings and being willing to troubleshoot problems for us or answer any questions. Jay Monteiro has been the best vice president anyone could ask for. He has kept me grounded and encouraged me to stay on OSC, something I have loved to do for as long as I can. Thank you, Jay. Cindy Kozumplik is knowledgeable and steps in to help whenever needed. That is a gift. To Lisa DeRango — my supervisor, who lets me take on the world if I want but also supports balance — your support means so much to me. Tiffany Morris has stepped in for so many people

at OSC to go to meetings on their behalf and does whatever is needed. She has also helped tremendously in our department and that has allowed me to do all that I do.

As we all look for ways to reduce costs and be more efficient, I must put a shout out to Dan Ihm, Elson Smith and their team for their help in integrating a new system in record time. Any time that you can save for your department, it is savings for the university, and that is the mindset we must be in.

I know I can't thank everyone by name, but thank you to everyone for all you do to make NIU a place where students want to come and learn, where faculty want to come and teach and staff want to work. This is a place where people donate millions of dollars because they believe in NIU.

I encourage you to attend our upcoming OSC meetings April 3, May 1 and June 5. Our meetings are at 9 a.m. the first Thursday of every month. The presenters April 3 will be Carol Sumner, vice president of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer; George Middlemist, vice president of Administration and Finance and CFO; and John Acardo, senior associate vice president and Chief Human Resources Officer. This is a wonderful time to ask any questions that you may have for any of them. All the meetings are currently in a hybrid format, which makes it easier than ever to listen in.

At the time of this writing, we have just 10 Fridays left in the semester so keep that in mind when you see our students, encourage them, and let them know they are halfway to the finish line. Sometimes a little positivity and a smile go a long way to making someone's day better.

I wish you all a strong finish to another great 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

njohnson11@niu.edu | osc@niu.edu

New HRS Professional Development Opportunities

Human Resource Services (HRS) is pleased to announce a series of new professional development opportunities for supervisors and leaders across campus. Coordinated by Employee Well-being, HRS will offer monthly Tips and Tools sessions for supervisors and interested staff and a Leadership Development series for all existing and emerging leaders across campus.

During the Tips and Tools sessions, the discussions will provide an opportunity to refresh and refine expertise in functional processes at NIU. We began from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, March 19 over Teams with a discussion on Onboarding and Establishing a Strong Workplace Culture. We will present a new topic from noon to 1 p.m. each third Wednesday of the month over Teams. Future sessions, with details and registration information, will be announced soon.

The Leadership Development series began Friday, March 21, and runs from noon to 1 p.m. over Teams. That discussion offered an opportunity to discuss Change Management as shared consideration and ideas that focused on adaptation and growth. We will continue the series with a new topic from noon to 1 p.m. the third Friday of each month over Teams. Future sessions with details and registration will be announced soon.

Employee Well-being Professional Development Opportunities

It's not too late to participate in upcoming Employee Well-being training and learning opportunities for the spring semester. To see what is being offered and to register please visit the [Employee Well-being website](#).

NIU Health and Wellness Fair

The NIU Health and Wellness Fair is coming back to campus. The event is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, April 16 in the Holmes Student Center Ballroom. More information will be coming out soon.

DoIT series: Microsoft Office Products

Welcome to our new OSC newsletter series from DoIT which will focus on the Microsoft Office products that are available to you to use in the office. Each newsletter we will feature a different application. This time we are featuring the product of **MS Teams**.

MS Teams is a unified communication tool that allows for one-on-one conversation, group chat, video/audio calls and conferencing, and is integrated with the full suite of O365 applications that we've come to rely upon at NIU. MS Teams is available to all faculty, staff and students via O365 or the downloadable app.

MS Teams recently became the primary voice option on campus with all phone calls now routed through Teams Voice. In addition to working as your primary phone system, MS Teams allows you to collaborate with others by scheduling meetings, sharing files and even sharing applications. MS Teams is the one-stop shop for all your collaboration needs.

More information is available on the [Division of Information Technology's website](#). For a more in-depth discussion on how to use MS Teams, please send an email to Cindy Kozumplik at ckozumplik@niu.edu to set up an informational meeting for you and/or your team, or consider attending a MS Teams workshop ([view workshop schedule](#)).

Confessions of a Seasoned Huskie



Meet Kristine Collin, financial advisor in the Student Financial Advising Services/Financial Aid and Scholarship Office since June 26, 2023. Though she's new in her current role, Kristine is no stranger to NIU, having worked here in different capacities over the years. Let's dive into her journey.

Kristine, where is your favorite place in the world?

My absolute favorite place in the world is at home with my family. However, I recently visited Glacier National Park, and I was completely awestruck! I would gladly return to the park time and time again to explore all the areas that I missed the first time. It's absolutely magical!

Why is it your favorite? What makes it so special?

I love the outdoors, being in nature, and hiking! Being at Glacier is like stepping into a beautiful painting. Every corner you turn, there's something remarkable to see, whether it's the mountains, the waterfalls, the lakes, or the wildlife... again, it's just magical!

Sounds like a real-life postcard! So, why did you want to work at NIU?

I was a student worker years ago while working on my bachelor's degree, which led to a full-time job in the Student Financial Aid Office after graduation. I worked as a financial aid counselor until I had my daughter and decided to stay home to raise her (as well as my other two children). When my youngest child went to school, I returned to NIU, but this time in the Athletic Business Office. I loved working in Athletics, but my position was only part-time, so when I was offered a position at my son's school, once again, I left NIU. However, after being away for several years, I missed NIU. I missed working with the students, the university community, and the feeling of being a Huskie. When the opportunity arose for me to return to NIU and work with the students, I decided to return to my roots. So, as you stated, I guess I'm not so much of a rookie, but more of a seasoned rookie!

How do you overcome setbacks?

I've learned that there will always be setbacks in life, but they don't have to control our lives. To overcome these setbacks, I decide to persevere through them. I believe that this is a conscious decision that we need to make. We can either give up and feel sorry for ourselves, or we can get up, brush ourselves off, and get back on track. Of course, setbacks can be upsetting, and it's OK to be upset. But we can't let them define us. We need to learn from them and move forward.

What was the best concert you've ever attended?

This is a hard one. I've seen a lot of really good concerts! The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, The Grateful Dead were all fantastic shows back in the day! One that really sticks out in my mind, though, was at the Duke Ellington Ballroom at the Holmes Student Center back in 1991. The Red Hot Chili Peppers headlined the show, with Smashing Pumpkins and Pearl Jam as the opening acts. I still have my ticket stub — \$15 for students and \$18 for nonstudents! Imagine what that ticket would cost today!

That lineup is legendary! What's the craziest legal thing you've ever done?

One of the craziest things I ever did was going on a road trip with my husband and three kids to the Grand Canyon and back. We pulled our little pop-up camper behind our minivan and saw eight National Parks (nine if you count both rims of the Grand Canyon) in 11 days. We changed seven tires, slept on the side of the road, ate trail mix for just about every meal and accidentally

left one child behind at a lookout point somewhere in the middle of Utah! (Don't worry, we realized it after a few miles and went back for her right away! And she was 16 years old and had her phone, so she was OK!). The kids were miserable, but we made the best memories ever, and we still laugh about the craziness we had!

What's the coolest thing you're working on right now?

My kids recently gave me a Viking Village Lego set for my birthday. I think it's pretty cool!

Describe your favorite family tradition.

I have a very large family, and we have lots of fun traditions. One of my favorite traditions is our annual pumpkin carving party. Everyone brings their own pumpkin, a dish to pass, drinks to share, and lots of laughs. Costumes are optional, but usually make the party more fun!

Living or dead, what individual(s) would you like to share a meal with?

I would love just one more chance to sit down and share a meal with my dad. My time with him was cut way too short.

Tell me something wonderful that happened to you.

I once won a trip to Hawaii on the "Live! With Regis and Kelly" show! I sent in a postcard for my name to be put in the lottery of participants, and my postcard was drawn! They called me, and then they spun the wheel, and it landed on the Turtle Bay Resort on the North Shore of Hawaii. I had to answer a trivia question about the previous day's guest on the show in order to win. The question was: "What was Kevin Bacon's first movie?"

Did you guess the right answer?

I did! It was "Animal House."

Where do you like to go on vacation?

We've spent many vacations with extended family in St. Pete Beach, Florida, and Traverse City, Michigan. But my favorite places to travel to are the National Parks. I've been to a fair amount of them, but there are still so many more that I want to see!

And what do you do there?

When we go to Florida, we spend most of our time just relaxing on the beach. In Michigan, we mainly hang out with family. There's so much to do in the area, so depending on the time of year, we go canoeing, to the beach to swim or rockhound, hike, and ski. When we go to the National Parks, we do a lot of hiking, but we also try to do one fun splurge activity like horseback riding, whitewater rafting, or whatever is offered in the area.

What would you do if you won a million dollars?

If I won a million dollars, first I would pay off my house and all my bills (because I'm responsible like that). Then I would travel! There are so many places I want to visit. I would backpack through Europe, starting in Norway and working my way down to Italy. I would have to add Iceland and Great Britain in there somewhere, though. I would spend time in Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, South America and the Caribbean Islands. An African safari is on my list. Oh, and I would love to see Alaska and the Arctic! I'm pretty low maintenance — I don't need a fancy hotel, so I could make the money go far!

Sounds like you've already spent some time thinking about that last question 😊. Thanks so much, Kristine for opening up and sharing your experiences with us today. Well, that's all the time we have folks. Remember to contact me at tgipson1@niu.edu if you'd like to be featured in our next article.

This article was written with support from ChatGPT.

Employment Changes

January 2025

Welcome New Employees

- Avery Angel, Office Administrator – Psychology
- Lane Carson, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Dorothy Cloud, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Jason Derrington, Admissions and Records Representative – Registration and Records
- Anna Gonzalez, Assistant Food Service Manager – Residential Dining Service
- Brittany Grote, Culinary Worker III – Residential Dining Service
- Mikyung Hi, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Karyn Higgs, Grants and Contracts Associate – Sponsored Programs Administration
- Sree Kanagala, IT Technical Associate – Report Cards
- Prashanth Kankala, Office Manager – Campus Dining Service
- Lorenzo Lopez, Police Telecommunicator – Public Safety
- Noah Rhea, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Jayden Rhodes, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Lonnie Roundtree IV, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Nafeez Shaik, IT Technical Associate – Report Cards
- Jeniece Smith, Editorial Writer – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Maneesh Thudi, IT Technical Associate – Report Cards

Retirements

- Carolyn Cannon, Office Manager – College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
- Sheryl Decker, Business Manager – Building Services
- Bobbie Disrud, Culinary Worker III – Lorado Taft Operations
- Karen Eaton, Office Administrator – Transportation
- Steve Kispert, Program/Student Advisor – Accountancy
- Myrna Lopez, Office Support Associate – CHANCE Program
- Daniel Nolan, Painter – Physical Plant
- Tim Rasmussen, Electrician – Physical Plant
- Diane Rich, Office Administrator – Nursing
- Denise White, Office Support Specialist – Child Development and Family Center
- Kelly Williams, Food Service Sanitation Laborer – Lorado Taft Operations

Separations

- Stanley Anukwuocha, Office Support Specialist – Northern Illinois Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- Harold Bell, Financial Aid Coordinator – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office
- Melissa Burin, Dietitian Nutritionist – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Vincent Civitello, Main Desk Attendant – Holmes Student Center
- Travis Dahlhauser, Program/Student Advisor – Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning
- Allyn Davis, Housing Officer – Housing and Residential Services
- Karina Degaetano, Senior Events Coordinator – Conferences Event Management
- Brittany Grote, Culinary Worker III – Residential Dining Service
- Austin Johnson, Office Support Associate – Illinois Board of Examiners
- Prashanth Kankala, Office Manager – Campus Dining Service
- Yashwanth Katsuri, IT Technical Associate – Report Cards
- Omar Ramirez, Police Officer – Public Safety
- Nicole Ruiz, Admissions and Records Representative – Registration and Records
- Lisa Scott, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Irshad Shaik, IT Technical Associate
- Brianna Wicker, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- Kevin Wright, Office Manager – Nonprofit and NGO Studies

Death:

- Paula Vasko, Office Manager – Engineering Technology

February 2025

Welcome New Employees

- Chynar Amanova, Program Assistant – Curriculum and Instruction
- Michael Cusimano, Food Service Area Supervisor – Conference Event Management
- Mary Fitzgerald, Business/Administrative Associate – Illinois Board of Examiners
- Breanna Grant, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- David Guzzardo, Storekeeper II – Materials Management
- James Malloy, Facility Operations Specialist – Conference Event Management
- Craig Mulligan, Grants and Contracts Associate – Sponsored Programs Administration
- Hillary Neibert, Administrative Aide – College of Health and Human Sciences
- Gloria Perez, Community Outreach Worker – P-20 Center
- Nancy Teboda, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- Perry Travis, Automotive Technician – Transportation

Retirements

- Laura Weber, Office Administrator – Sociology
- Katharine Whitelaw, IT Technical Associate – Ethics and Compliance
- Deborah Williams, Office Manager – Graduate School

Separations

- Magaly Avila Rodriguez, Program Director – P-20 Center
- Carlos Brown Jr., Program Services Specialist – Computer Science
- Elana Fleshman, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- Karyn Garland, Office Support Specialist – Computer Science
- Michael Genslinger, Distribution Clerk – Campus Dining Service
- Ana Moreno, Office Manager – Educational Technology, Research and Assessment
- Tracy Ringle, Program Coordinator – University Recreation and Wellness
- Brady Smith, Steam and Power Plant III – Heating Plant

Service Awards

January 2025

5 Years

- Nicholas Gough – Holmes Student Center
- Angela Mull – Campus Dining Service
- Paige Shinberg – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Yvette Wright – Human Resource Services

10 Years

- Andrew Board – University Marketing
- Matthew Cabrera – University Legal Services
- Thomas Handschuh – Building Services
- James Lopez – Building Services
- Danae Miesbauer – Counseling Adult and Higher Education
- Vazravirat Pasumarthi – Report Cards
- Jeffrey Schmerbach – Physical Plant

15 Years

- Kurtis Lassard – Campus Dining Service

20 Years

- Diane Fitzhugh – Center for Child Welfare and Education
- Denise Franklin – Residential Dining Service
- Daksha Patel – Biological Sciences

25 Years

- Stephanie Kruizenga – Human Resource Services
- Brian Timms – Physical Plant
- Rachel Xidis – University Marketing

30 Years

- Michael Reynolds – College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
- Derrick Smith – Center for Black Studies

February 2025

5 Years

- Melanie Griegoliet – Career Services
- Mitchell Huftalin – Orientation and Family Connections
- Tiffany Morris – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Sarah Moskal – Counseling and Consultation Services
- Yuliana Yarmolovych – History

10 Years

- Joy Mitchell – Student Conduct

15 Years

- Adam Baie – Heating Plant

20 Years

- Daniel Mojica – Public Safety
- Patricia Meyers – College of Business
- Mercedita Sawyer – Building Services

25 Years

- Tammie Pulak – Building Services

Northern Staff News is published by the Operating Staff Council of Northern Illinois University.

Editor: Tawanda Paul.

Contributors: Grace Hook, Natasha Johnson, Cindy Kozumplik, Rave Meyer, Jay Monteiro, Jason Reed and Karen Smith.

Graphic Design: Holly Nicholson.

Northern Illinois University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution. Printed by authority of the state of Illinois.

niu.edu 3/25.