



Table of Contents

President's Corner.....	1
StaffFest 2025.....	2
Fun Things to do in DeKalb County.....	3
Campus Cleanup.....	3
DoIT series: Sharepoint.....	3
Confessions of a Seasoned Huskie.....	4
Employment Changes.....	6
Service Awards.....	6

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,

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

- Cathy Doederlein
- Jennifer Manning

Presidential Award for Staff Excellence

- Anna Richardson
- Brian Richard
- Christopher Mitchell
- Matthew Dupuis
- Michaela Holtz
- Paul Fix

Staff Inclusive Excellence Award

- Jennifer Salmon
- Mark Pietrowski

Staff Mentorship Award

- Megan Woodruff
- Tori Artman

Staff Award for Campus Impact

- Brian Schneider
- David Rapp

Staff Award for Student Impact

- Angela Kaminski
- Laurie Sodaro

Rising Huskie Award

- Malhar Saheed
- Sladjana Grbic

Patricia S. Siebrasse Administrative Professionals Award for Excellence

- Debbie Malcolm
- Tracy Mereness

Award for Advancing Creativity and Innovation

- NIU and Trane partnership team: Jason Askin, Greg Martyn, Kathy Marshall, Antoinette Bridges, Greg Brady, Justin Bend, Courtney Gallaher, Tom Viel, Belinda Roller, Jim Fitzjarrell, Justin Vest, Scott Betts and Adrienne Arhos.

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

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. It has been a pleasure serving as your president.

Take good care,

Natasha Johnson

President, Operating Staff Council 2023-2025

njohnson11@niu.edu | osc@niu.edu

StaffFest 2025



StaffFest (also formerly known as the Civil Service Celebration) was created by OSC in 1998 and is an annual event. The purpose of StaffFest is to celebrate the magnificent work done by NIU's employees throughout the year and is highly supported by NIU leadership. Past celebrations included outdoor and/or indoor games and activities along with a lunch for NIU employees who RSVP to attend the event. NIU administrators volunteer at the event to welcome attendees and help with games, activities and lunch distribution. There is also the opportunity to help raise money for the Operating Staff Dependent Endowed Scholarship and the Civil Service Emergency Fund.



This year, StaffFest was held on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, in the Holmes Student Center (HSC) Duke Ellington Ballroom as a combined event between Operating Staff Council (OSC) and the Supportive Professional Staff (SPS) Council. This event included the SPS Council Annual Award Ceremony recognizing SPS employees for their contributions to our university.

Over 600 employees RSVP'd for the event, with just under 500 in attendance. This year, employees were given the choice to select from three boxed-lunch meal options. Activities included trikes, bean bag toss, a coloring activity table and a "Guess the number of Hershey's Kisses" game in which the winner would get to keep the jar of Hershey's Kisses. A huge congratulations to Mariann O'Malley on having the closest guess.



A special thank you to the StaffFest Planning Committee for all your hard work and dedication: Cindy Kozumplik (chair), Katherine Mosher (co-chair), Jessie Alex, Angie Gutiérrez-Vargas, Rave Meyer, Margaret Myles, Mark Pietrowski, David Rapp, Sara Richter, Karen Smith and Tracey Ward.



We would also like to thank President Lisa Freeman for her attendance and support, as well as the NIU administrators who volunteered at the event: John Acardo, Laurie Elish-Piper, Kelly Fiala, Kelsey Johnson, Clint Michael-Reneau and Matt Streb.

Lastly, to all our NIU employees, we thank you for your time and dedication to our students and our university and hope you had a wonderful time. Go Huskies!

Fun Things to do in DeKalb County

Summer is just around the corner. Are you looking for fun things to do? Try out these events:

- Relieve some stress in a safe way by visiting the [Wreck Room](#).
- How about a little axe throwing? Reserve your room at [Northern Axeposure](#).
- Seeking a place to escape (or escape from)? [Syco Escape Rooms](#) may be the place for you.
- Who doesn't love a game of indoor golf? Plan your visit soon to [The Family Fun Center](#).
- Can't seem to choose? Bring the whole family and do a little bit of everything at the [Sycamore Family Sports Center](#).
- Want to do your own thing, but just don't have the gear? Visit [NIU's Rec Center](#).

Disclaimer: You acknowledge that participation in these events involves inherent risks and dangers, including the risk of personal injury or health-related issues. You assume full responsibility for these risks and agree to participate at your own risk.

Campus Cleanup

Join the Operating Staff Council for a cleanup around campus from 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, June 5 (weather permitting). For more information, please contact Cindy Kozumplik at ckozumplik@niu.edu.

DoIT Series: SharePoint

Welcome to our new OSC newsletter section, "DoIT Series," which will focus on the Microsoft Office products that are available to you as an NIU employee. Each newsletter we will feature a different application. This time we are featuring the SharePoint product.

SharePoint is a tool you can access in Microsoft Office Suite. This is a place to store, organize, share and access information from any device, in any location. All you need is a browser. SharePoint is part of the collaboration tools included with Microsoft (MS) Teams. SharePoint can be connected to a new or existing MS Teams site.

There are two different SharePoint sites that you can create, a "team" site or a "communication" site. In general, a team site can be thought of as a collaboration location for multiple individuals. A communication site can be thought of as an intranet site where you share information with your department or a group of individuals. Below is a table that provides comparison information between the two sites:

Team Site	Communication Site
Track and stay updated on group documents.	Create a portal or subject-based site.
Share team resources and have co-authors content.	Engage dozens or thousands of viewers.
All site owners and members publish site content.	Few content authors and many site visitors.
Can connect with other Microsoft 365 products.	Limited connections with other products.

Looking for more information on SharePoint? Please visit the [guidelines page](#) that our university has created.

If you are interested in learning more about SharePoint, please reach out to Cindy Kozumplik at ckozumplik@niu.edu. Cindy can schedule an informational meeting with you and your team members. There are also several SharePoint campus workshops ([view workshop schedule](#)).

Confessions of a Seasoned Huskie

Featuring Natasha Johnson, Associate Athletic Director for Recreation



So, Natasha — let's start with the basics. When did your NIU journey begin?

Nov. 10, 2014.

And where do you work now, and what's your title?

I work in Intercollegiate Athletics — Recreation. My title is Associate Athletic Director for Recreation.

If you could add one thing to your department, what would it be?

I would add another me, so I could get the work done in half the time — or a couple more staff members, which would be more realistic considering there's only one of me.

We're still working on cloning technology, but I'll put in a good word. Let's imagine your life story as a book, what would the title be?

"I Could Never Tell It All!"

That sounds like a must-read — Oprah's Book Club, take note! And what genre would it fall under?

It would be a little bit of everything because in life, things are unpredictable and you have to learn to laugh, grow and adapt.

How many positions have you held at NIU, and why have you stayed?

I've held a few positions within the same department/division until our department was switched to a new division. The role has always surrounded numbers, business, HR and technology — which is a bit ironic considering all my degrees are in business.

Isn't it funny how life leads us exactly where we need to be — even if it ignores our degree plans? What made the best department you've worked in so great?

*Shall I say, me? *LOL* I think it's the care we all have for our students. We couldn't do what we do without them. We are the second-largest employer of students on campus. Hopefully, that's still true!*

Confirmed: You are, in fact, a departmental treasure. Tell us something you'll never do again.

Fly in a helicopter. I did it once and took a video to remind myself. I'd also say I'll never snorkel out of the country again in an ocean without the proper safety measures. That's a story for another day, but let's just say I'm glad I'm here to mention it!

That sounds terrifying and oddly specific. We definitely want the extended version of this story someday. What's the most spontaneous thing you've ever done?

Snorkeling in the ocean.

Would you do it again?

No, not if I remember my last experience. But you know, people say, "Never say never!"

Wise words from someone who clearly has experience; score - ocean: 1, Natasha: wiser! What have you forgotten today?

I don't know because I still haven't remembered.

What movie scarred you for life?

"Poltergeist." "Step into the light, Caroline." Scary! But I've also been scared by a couple parts in "Moana," so don't go by my scare chart.

That movie messed up a whole generation. And Moana? Hey, some parts do get intense.

What's your survival tip for lasting at NIU?

This shouldn't be a shocker, but one tip is: Do the job you are paid to do. Anyone can say anything, but one thing they shouldn't be able to say is that you didn't do your job. We are paid to work.

Now there's a golden rule! Simple. Powerful. Extremely hard to argue with. What makes you laugh?

I have been known to laugh at funny jokes...but sometimes I find myself cracking up at the jokes that were not funny at all. There are days I smile and laugh so much my cheeks hurt. I hear laughter is good for the soul, you all should try it.

A laugh a day keeps the doctor away. What's your favorite family tradition?

Going out to eat for certain holidays. In recent years, my family came up with this rule: If you cook something and there are leftovers after the holiday, you can't cook it for a holiday again. We only want food that disappears completely to make a return appearance.

That's a brilliant strategy. If the mac and cheese don't vanish, it's benched!

Who would you love to share a meal with, living or dead?

Before, I would've said Martin Luther King Jr., but after I heard someone say their deceased loved one, I now say my grandfather. He made the best grits you could ever have in your life. And if there was a ticket price to get into heaven, I often joke his grits would get him in. I also wouldn't mind sharing a meal with Jesus — if I'm even worthy to be in His presence.

That answer made me smile. Grits powered by love — heavenly indeed.

And what would you eat with them?

With my grandfather, definitely his grits. With Jesus, man shall not eat by bread alone. I wouldn't even be able to eat. I'd have too many questions.

After a stressful day, what's the first thing you do when you get home?

Stress? What's that?

Where do you like to go on vacation?

I go everywhere — and I prefer not to go to the same place twice.

A woman of mystery and momentum. I love it. And what do you do while you're there?

Too much. I often have to declare what type of vacation it is: relaxing or an overload of fun.

Prevacation labels? Genius! Can I borrow that system? What's your proudest accomplishment, work or personal?

Graduating from college several times. I'm the first in my family, and I'm very proud of that. It just goes to show, there is nothing we can't do.

That's so true. Several times is definitely an accomplishment (well, several). You're handed a karaoke mic, what's your go-to song?

"I Will Always Love You" by Whitney Houston (RIP).

That's the spirit! Whitney would be proud. And maybe just a *tiny* bit nervous.

Have you sung it at karaoke before?

Yes, many times. I should charge a cover.

Every concert needs a headliner. I see you, Natasha.

Last question — if you won a million dollars tomorrow, what would you do?

Invest, live off the interest, and start a give-back charity. I'd like to say I'd also keep working.

Of course you'd keep working. You're a Huskie through and through.

Final Whistle: Words from a Wise Huskie

Natasha's blend of humor, humility and heart gives us a peek into the incredible energy and dedication she brings to NIU each day. Through flying in helicopters (once!) and conquering college multiple times, she proves there's nothing a Huskie can't do — though she'll wisely steer clear of the ocean next time.

Thanks for sharing your stories with the rest of the operating staff and members today. We will truly miss you as you transition out of your presidential role on the council. And thanks to all of you for listening in.

Answering these questions has been a lot of fun for our past features. If you'd like to become a part of this fun, just send an email to Tawanda Paul at tgipson1@niu.edu.

This article was written with support from ChatGPT.

Employment Changes

March 2025

Welcome New Employees

- Kyle Abel, Program/Student Advisor – Academic Advising Center
- Susan Bidstrup, Office Support Specialist – Materials Management
- Madison Hogel, Service Enterprises Manager – Holmes Student Center
- Angel Koyi, IT Technical Associate – Application Services
- Tasha Neisewander, Program/Student Advisor – Academic Advising Center
- Derrick Petruchuis, Food Service Sanitation Laborer – Residential Dining Service
- Gracie Wajda, Program Assistant – P-20 Center
- Elizabeth Zarek, Office Support Specialist – Campus Parking

Retirements

- Colene Pottinger, Building Service Worker – Building Services

Separations

- Amanda Ascensio, Office Manager – Psychology
- Jon Butler, IT Support Associate – Physical Plant
- Breanna Grant, Child Development Supervisor – Child Development and Family Center
- Zachary Nichols, Sports Equipment Supervisor – Intercollegiate Athletics
- William Turner II, Manager of Sports Facilities – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Jayci Wagoner, Customer Service Assistant – Bursar
- Giresbhabu Yemparala, IT Technical Associate – Report Cards
- Michael Yndestad, Office Administrator - Transportation

April 2025

Welcome New Employees

- Eric Erato, Program/Student Advisor – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Ginny Hayes, Program Services Specialist – Center for Child Welfare and Education
- Giselle Munoz, Program/Student Advisor – Student Financial Advising Services
- Sadie Schaus, Program Coordinator – Office Research Development

Retirements

- Deanna Kristen, IT Technical Associate – Application Services

Separations

- Philip Corvino, Program/Student Advisor – College of Education
- Brendan Jimenez, Security Guard – Public Safety
- Aljuwan Smith, Building Service Worker – Building Services
- Jacob Tomassini, Building Service Worker – Building Services

Death

- Jean Williams, Customer Service Representative – Bursar

Service Awards

March 2025

5 Years

- Brian Buddinger – Building Services
- Rogelio Godinez-Parra – Building Services
- Nicholas Holloway – Building Services
- Krystyna Kamka – Center for Latino and Latin American Studies
- Patrick Kunzer – Office of Institutional Communications
- Xavier Lewis – Regional Center Operations

- Rachel Schmit – College of Business
- Yasir Shaik – Report Cards
- Sevastiana Torres – Admissions Tours and Events
- Terry West – Holmes Student Center

10 Years

- Jonathan Cook – College of Business
- Kimberly Green – College of Education
- LeeAnn Gustafson – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Julie Schetley – College of Health and Human Sciences

15 Years

- Samantha McCarron – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office

20 Years

- Kenneth Whitney – Residential Dining Service

25 Years

- Jeffrey Anderson – Heating Plant
- Deidre Davis – Grounds
- Patrick Sanchez – Libraries
- Lori Viereckl – Building Services

30 Years

- Elizabeth Zarek – Campus Parking

April 2025

5 Years

- Erin Elder – Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development Division Administration

10 Years

- Scott Foelske – Intercollegiate Athletics
- Lisa Johnson – Physical Plant
- Robin Kenney – Development Administration
- Margaret Thacker – College of Education

15 Years

- Joan Laurino – Office of Information Security

20 Years

- Brian Toonen

25 Years

- Lennart Lennergard – Integrated Media Technologies
- Rebecca Martin – Financial Aid and Scholarship Office
- Jeffrey McCarthy – Infrastructure Services
- Ernest Williams – Building Services

30 Years

- Loris Anderson – Bursar
- Suzanne Hogan – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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

Editor: Tawanda Paul.

Contributors: John Acardo, Angie Gutiérrez-Vargas, Grace Hook, Natasha Johnson, Cindy Kozumplik, Jay Monteiro.

Graphic Design: Holly Nicholson.

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

niu.edu 5/25.