

TO: Staff Senate
FROM: Traci Vennie
DATE: August 20, 2025
SUBJECT: Staff Senate Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Jill Eidenberg, Lucy Grissinger, Denise Kuzma, Traci Vennie, Melissa Eckenrode, Gerianne Barber, Janice Mecadon, Melinda Finnerty, Shawn Beistline, Rose Ann Jubinski, Patti Tetreault, Daniela Teneva, Autumn Forgione, Sybil Keris, Gina Butler, Melisa Gallo, Diane Collins Gilmore, Melissa Przewlocki, Raymond Kratz, Megan Sweeney, Kelly Cook, Brenda Clarke, Bridget Hunter, Grace Crowley

Not in Attendance: Alex Wasalinko, Bridget Judge, Brenda Amato, Kristi Klien, Marcella LaMura, Bridget Conlogue, Meghan Eidenberg, Shonna Emick, Joseph Medina, Hollie Roscioli, Bryn Schofield

Welcome: Traci Vennie called the meeting to order. Gina Butler offered the opening prayer. Volunteer needed for opening prayer at the next meeting, Kelly Cook volunteered. The Land Acknowledgement Statement was read. Attendance was checked, and a quorum was met.

Review of Agenda: A motion was made to accept the agenda and minutes. The motion was seconded, and the agenda was approved.

Guest – Stephen Hietsch - Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration

Introduced himself and offered his background and experience. Also answered questions. Will probably be back to offer formal presentation.

Liaison Report: Patricia Tetreault

Summer Board Meeting Consistency & Transition to Regular Schedule

- The team maintained a consistent meeting schedule over the summer.
- They are now transitioning back to their regular meetings.

Key Cabinet Focus Areas Over the Summer

- Enrollment and Budget were central topics.
- The Strategic Enrollment Management Plan was a major initiative:
 - Led by Shannon and her team.
 - Developed in collaboration with an external group called Human Capital.

- Aims to align with Steve's (CFO) vision for purposeful changes to increase net tuition revenue. Will be integrated with the campus-wide strategic plan.
- Focus on:
 - Marketing strategies.
 - Investment in outreach and brand visibility.

Goals of Strategic Enrollment Work

- Increase revenue to:
 - Cover institutional expenses.
 - Support staff and faculty.
 - Invest in facilities and technology.
 - Fund marketing and branding efforts.
- Maintain commitment to the mission:
 - Provide financial aid and support to students with greater need.
 - Balance revenue generation with mission-driven access and equity.

Website Strategy & Redesign

- The current website has ~31,000 pages, which is considered excessive.
- The goal is to make the website outward-facing, serving as a dynamic portal for prospective students and families.
- The website should bring the Scranton experience to life, engaging visitors and drawing them in.
- Internal content (e.g., policies like alternate work schedules) should be moved to the internal portal for faculty/staff use.
- This shift supports a clearer distinction between external audiences (prospective students, families) and internal users (faculty, staff).

Strategic Planning & Summer Progress

- Significant work has been done over the summer.
- Led by Tracy and Kate, the Strategic Planning Committee has been actively developing a draft.
- The committee is divided into four working groups: each focused on a strategic pillar:
 1. Enrollment and Access
 2. Innovative Programs and Pedagogy
 3. Student Success
 4. Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness (supports the other three pillars)
- These groups are developing specific goals under each pillar and reporting back to the full committee.
- A retreat in early August helped solidify the conceptual framework.
- The campus community will likely hear more about this plan in the early fall.
- The Board of Trustees will review a draft at the October meeting.

Strategic Plan Extension

- The current strategic plan was originally set to conclude in May.
- The Board granted an extension to allow more time for meaningful development amid ongoing changes.
- Progress is being made, with more updates expected soon.

University Financials

- Steve (CFO) did not present financial details during this meeting.
- Encourage having him present to the Senate as he explains financial matters in a clear, accessible way, making complex topics understandable without needing a CPA background.
- Key financial insight:
 - The university has a structural deficit—expenses exceed revenue.
 - This situation is not sustainable long-term.
 - The university's historical financial strength has provided temporary flexibility, but strategic decisions are needed moving forward.

Resource Management Committee

- A new subgroup of Cabinet focused on financial decisions and resource allocation.
- Purpose: to focus on financial matters more deeply with follow up at Cabinet meetings.
- Covers:
 - Personnel
 - Technology investments
 - Facilities renovations
- Programmatic resource needs Has met about three times so far, mostly discussing processes.
- Will review position replacement proposals following staff retirements.

Faculty Contract Negotiations

- The current faculty contract expires August 31.
- No tentative agreement has been reached yet.
- It's unlikely a new contract will be ratified by the deadline.
- Operations may continue under the existing agreement until a new one is finalized.
- Faculty may engage in increased activity to raise awareness of their cause, which is permitted under the National Labor Relations Act.

Transparency & Communication

- Staff have expressed appreciation for the increased transparency around financial and strategic matters.
- Open communication helps reduce fear and uncertainty among staff regarding budget and job security.

Staff Retirement Plan

- 88 staff members were eligible; 31 chose to retire.
- Goal: not to replace all 31 positions; the plan is meant to generate long-term savings.
- Cabinet members are asked to:
 - Evaluate whether each position is still needed.
 - Consider restructuring roles.
 - Explore technology solutions or cross-divisional resource sharing.
- Some VPs have already decided not to replace certain roles.
- Others are proposing revised roles or new responsibilities that may lead to:
 - Title changes
 - Salary increases
 - Growth opportunities for existing staff

Next Steps

- Proposals for replacements or restructuring are brought to the Resource Management Committee for review.
- Final decisions will take several months, as some leaders are waiting on evaluations or operational cycles.
- As of August 20, there are no plans to offer the retirement program again, despite rumors.

New Hires Over the Summer

- **Tim Dulle**– Executive Director, Jesuit Center
- **Daniel Marenda** – Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)
- **Dave Dzurec** – Associate Provost (started Monday)
- **Liz Garcia**– New title and expanded role:
 - Office renamed
 - Will oversee broader compliance efforts, including:
 - Title IX, ADA
 - Enterprise risk management evaluation and documentation process
 - Centralizing university policies for easier access

Provost Search Update

- Committee meets September 5 for training and rubric development.
- October: Candidate calibration.
- December: Candidate selection.
- Process is moving forward steadily.

Parking Updates

- Lower Madison Lot: Staff and commuter parking only.
- Upper Madison Lot: Remains resident student parking.
- Houlihan Lot (behind Weiss Hall): 25 spaces for staff and commuters.

- Weiss Hall Lot: May include a few staff/commuter spaces (signage pending).
- New lots on Mulberry & Quincy: Designated for resident students.
- Goal: Ease parking congestion and clarify usage.

Facilities Discussion

- A question was raised about the sale of Lewis Brown Hall: Discussions have occurred about possibly selling or repurposing.
 - Currently, no buyer identified.
 - Part of broader review of university assets and strategic property use.

New Building Status

- The new building is ready and operational.
- Final touches (like signage and paving) are being completed.
- Staff have begun moving into the new building, with IT setup and furniture delivery underway.
- It's unclear if the building is open for general staff viewing, Gerry is being contacted for clarification.

Property & Asset Review

- There was a question about whether the university sold the property of an old athletic field. It appears the university has sold it.
- The university is reviewing unused or underutilized properties (e.g., Lewis Brown Hall) to determine if they should be retained or sold.
- This is part of a broader strategic asset evaluation.

Staffing & Workload Concerns

- VPs are being asked to evaluate staffing needs and models in their divisions.
- Example: Facilities use a professional formula based on square footage to determine staffing needs.
- Leaders are encouraged to assess:
 - Which services are essential
 - Which can be reduced or restructured
 - Opportunities for cross-divisional collaboration or technology solutions
- HR and leadership teams will review job descriptions and workloads to ensure feasibility and fairness.

Work-Life Balance for Professional Staff

- Concerns were raised about increasing workloads for exempt/professional staff.
- Some staff report working extra hours regularly, impacting wellness and morale.
- In some cases, staff have raised concerns with management but feel unheard or misunderstood.
- Leadership is open to individual conversations and encourages staff to share feedback directly or through appropriate channels.

President's Report – Traci Vennie

Previous Business Updates

- Graduate-level tuition benefits for staff/dependents: Still an open item, no new updates.
- Summer Series: No known scheduling updates; presumed inactive unless someone has more information.
- Dunkin Cruiser: Set up by Kristi; no further details provided.

New Business

Constitution Amendment – Article 3 (Membership Qualifications)

- Issue: In 2022, the bylaws were amended to change membership eligibility from 2 years to 1 year of continuous employment.
- The Constitution was not updated to reflect this change.
- A motion is required to begin the amendment process, but no vote could be held due to lack of quorum.
- Will be tabled until the next meeting.

Bylaws Amendment – Article 5 (Officers & Terms)

- Clarification needed regarding the president-elect role:
 - President-elect is a 3-year term: 1 year shadowing, 2 years as president.
 - If the current president is re-elected, there is no one to shadow, making the shadowing year redundant.
- Suggestion: Amend the bylaws to state that if a sitting president is elected to a second term, the shadowing year is waived.
- The recent election of Kristi as president-elect may have created confusion, as she is already serving as president.

No vote could be held; discussion will continue at the next meeting.

Additional Bylaws Note

- Article 5, Section E: States that the president-elect cannot hold any other officer position simultaneously.
- This clause may need clarification, especially in cases of consecutive presidential terms.

Action Items & Recommendations

- Members are encouraged to review the Constitution and Bylaws before the next meeting.
- Goal: Arrive prepared for a productive discussion and potential vote on amendments

Constitution & Bylaws Clarifications

- **President-elect confusion:**
 - Kristi was elected president-elect while already serving as president.
 - This created ambiguity around the shadowing year, which is meant for training.

- Suggestion: Amend bylaws to clarify that if a sitting president is re-elected, the shadowing year is waived.
- **Historical precedent:**
 - Mark Murphy served consecutive terms as president.
 - The group is encouraged to review past records (e.g., SharePoint, personal notes) to understand how similar cases were handled.
- **Article 5, Section E:** States that the president-elect cannot hold another officer position simultaneously—may need clarification considering current structure.

President's Award Plaque

- A new plaque has been ordered to replace the full existing one.
- Expanded from 20 to 48 name plates.
- All plates will be uniform in font and size.
- Cost: \$160
- 27 spaces remain for future recipients.

New Building Update

- The building is open for viewing, but finishing touches are still underway.
- Visitors may encounter minor construction activity.

Tuition Remission Clarification

- Lab courses (e.g., science with lab) and 4-credit courses are covered under the tuition remission benefit.
- Confirmed that these do not count separately toward the credit limit.

Suggestion from the Floor: Iggy Shuttle to Farmers Market

- Proposal: Partner with Campus Police to run the Iggy Shuttle to/from the Scranton Farmers Market.
- The market runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday through Thanksgiving.
- Suggested shuttle loop during lunch hours (12:00–1:30) to ease parking and promote wellness.
- Shuttle could rotate between staff and student days if demand increases.
- Patti will follow up with Campus Police to explore feasibility and partnerships.

Standing Committee Reports

Communications (Denise)

- Finalizing the next topic for communication.
- A suggestion was shared to highlight the Strategic Enrollment Plan led by Shannon's division.

Membership (Roseanne)

- All alternate and senator positions are now filled.
- Roseanne has been actively managing transitions and updates.

Board Committees

- Bryn Schofield: Serving on the Board's Education Committee.
- Lucia Grissinger: Serving on the Enrollment Management Committee.
- Antonelle Kern: Received the Staff Spirit Award this month.

Social Events & Community Building (Lucy)

- Christmas Celebration reserved for December 10—mark your calendars!

Staff Development

- No updates provided.

Staff Recognition & Excellence (Shawn & Autumn)

- Met via Zoom to discuss plans.
- Will continue with the Meg Cullen-Brown Award as-is.
- Roseanne will receive support as needed.
- Planning for Staff Recognition Luncheon on May 13, 2026.
- Inventory check shows no need for new engraved bells—current stock is sufficient.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Assessment Committee

- No members were present.
- No updates provided.

Motion to adjourn was made by Shawn, seconded by Gina.