

TO: Staff Senate  
FROM: Kristi Klien  
DATE: January 21, 2026  
SUBJECT: Staff Senate Meeting Minutes

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**In Attendance:** Lucy Grissinger, Denise Kuzma, Patti Tetreault, Sybil Keris, Melisa Gallo, Megan Sweeney, Kristi Klien, Bridget Conlogue, Shawn Beistline, Brenda Amato, Brenda Clarke, Diane Collins Gilmore, Marcella LaMura, Melissa Przewlocki, Melinda Finnerty, Shonna Emick, Grace Crowley, Jill Eidenberg, Bridget Hunter. Gerianne Barber, Gina Butler, Autumn Forgione, Rose Ann Jubinski, Traci Vennie

**Not in Attendance:** Meghan Eidenberg, Bryn Schofield, Daniela Teneva, Kelly Cook, Bridget Judge, Melissa Eckenrode, Raymond Kratz, Joseph Medina, Hollie Roscioli

**Welcome:** Kristi Klien called the meeting to order. Kristi Klien offered the opening prayer. Volunteer needed for the opening prayer at the next meeting, Brenda Amato 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. The motion was seconded, and the agenda was approved. Minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

**Guest: Brian Loughney**

### **Staff Handbook Updates**

Brief status update on revisions to the Staff Handbook

### **Key Updates & Changes**

#### **Mission & Vision Statements**

- Will be updated once the new University strategic plan is finalized.

#### **Section Owner Outreach**

- Brian has reached out to: Institutional Compliance, Mission & Ministry, University Police, and Parking for their respective updates.

#### **Non-Discrimination & Title IX**

- Provided by Liz Garcia:
  - Updates to the Notice of Non-Discrimination/Equal Opportunity section.
  - No changes to the Sexual Harassment/Sexual Misconduct policies.

- Responsible Employees & Reporting Obligations: Existing text to be removed and replaced with Liz's updated paragraph.

### **Waste, Fraud & Abuse**

- New section added (pending final approval) highlighting the **hotline** and how to report concerns—intended to raise awareness.

### **Dress Code**

- “Denim Fridays” language added. No other changes.

### **PTO / Carryover Clarification**

- New explanatory language intended to clarify year-end carryover and conversion:
  - Example noted: Of 4 carried over, 2 convert to sick at the turn of the new year (so you start the new year with 4 total again).
  - Wording may be further refined for simplicity/clarity.

### **Military Leave**

- Content consolidated using official USERRA (Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act) poster language.
- Direct link to the poster will be included (“Click here for more information”).

### **Work-Related Injuries & Workers' Compensation**

- Added guidance on medical releases (with/without restrictions).
- If restrictions exist, notify HR so they can coordinate with Institutional Compliance and Title IX for ADA reasonable accommodation review.

### **Supervisor Training**

- A clarifying sentence will be added (content not read in full).

### **University Tuition Remission**

- Reinforced statement: Staff and/or dependents must first meet admission requirements for the chosen program (this sentence also appears elsewhere but is being emphasized here).

### **Questions & Discussion**

- Gina's question: How is the Waste, Fraud & Abuse hotline monitored, and what constitutes “waste” in practice?
  - Example raised: Use of oversized garbage bags in office cans may be wasteful—should there be standards for right-sizing supplies to reduce waste and cost?
- Consolidate Military Leave language to USERRA poster content and include link. Emphasize admissions requirement in Tuition Remission section.

## **Liaison Report: Patricia Tetreault**

### **Hiring / Budget Update**

- There is NOT a hiring freeze.
- Leadership is currently evaluating 710 budget lines in preparation for zero-based budgeting beginning June 2026.
- University is considering investments in needed new technology, especially a new ERP system, due to heavy customization of current forms and outdated processes.

### **Property Sales**

- Several University-owned properties are on the market.
- One property recently sold for \$300,000.

### **Advancement / Giving Tuesday**

- Giving Tuesday results increased 15% over last year. (Dollar amount not yet available.)
- Advancement is undergoing an indepth analysis of operations to improve:
  - Overly manual processes
  - Access to data
  - Overall fundraising efficiency

### **External Partnerships**

- Ongoing discussions with:
  - Le Moyne College – exploring collaborative opportunities
  - Johnson College – potential meeting planned

### **Enrollment Updates**

- 7,100 applications received for Fall 2026.
- 68 Early Decision applicants.
- Spring transfer numbers are down compared to last year.

### **SIM System Update**

- Five-year projection for the SIM system upgrade (Admissions software):
  - Estimated cost: \$2,965,000
- Details on what the amount includes were not provided.

### **Academic & Administrative Updates**

#### **From Provost:**

- Significant increase in student accommodations.
- Registrar's Office is reorganizing roles and improving processes, including better software tools.

### **Gala 2026**

- Scheduled for October 1, 2026.
- Celebrates the 25th anniversary.
- Advancement is halfway to the \$7 million fundraising goal.

## **Presidents Report – Kristi Klien**

### **Graduate-Level Tuition Benefits for Staff Dependents**

- Still an open item.
- The President appears interested, but it did not make it into last year's budget.
- Hopeful that it may be reconsidered during the upcoming budget cycle.

### **Constitution & Bylaws Updates**

- Meeting with Patti scheduled for Monday.
- Goal: Finalize amendments so both documents match (one was updated previously and the other was not).

### **Staff Appreciation Party Discussion**

#### **Ideas Suggested**

- Games to encourage interaction
- Karaoke
- Bingo
- Cornhole

#### **Observation:**

- Attendance seems lower than in previous years, according to multiple staff members.

#### **Attendance Data**

- 220 RSVPs, approximately one-third of staff.
- There is interest in:
  - Understanding attendance trends over time
  - Identifying reasons why people do or do not attend

#### **Proposed Approach:**

- Short survey (2–3 questions) to staff:
  - Do you attend?
  - If yes, why? If no, why not?
  - What would make the event more appealing?

#### **Open Question:**

- Should this survey be handled by Staff Senate or through the Conference & Events team, since they handle RSVPs?

#### **Possible Next Steps**

- Contact Conferences & Events to request historical attendance data.
- Staff Senate to decide whether to issue a short engagement survey.
- Consider small, low-space games for this year *if feasible*, though significant programming changes may be too late.

## **Staff Appreciation Event Discussion – Summary**

### **Context**

The conversation centered around declining attendance at the annual Staff Appreciation Event, historical comparisons, potential reasons for reduced participation, and whether a survey or outreach to Conferences & Events might help inform future improvements.

### **Key Themes & Discussion Points**

#### **Attendance Has Declined Over the Years**

- Historically, the event was **packed**, with difficulty moving around and tables reserved in advance.
- In recent years, attendance feels significantly lower.
- Current RSVP count: ~220 attendees, including staff, faculty, and guests.

#### **Why People May Not Be Attending**

Several possible factors were raised:

- Cost concerns:
  - Some believe the event is too expensive, especially given current financial challenges.
  - Staff may prefer the funds be allocated differently.
- Sense of community has shifted:
  - Attendees tend to stay with their own departments.
  - Administrators often interact only with each other.
  - The event no longer feels as warm, inclusive, or community-wide as it once did.
- Personal comfort / safety factors:
  - Some individuals may not feel comfortable attending due to personal circumstances (e.g., partner identity, social dynamics).
- General cultural changes post-COVID:
  - A sense that overall community engagement has changed.
- Event “feel” is different:
  - Less dancing
  - Less mingling
  - Less cross-department interaction
  - Feels more formal or siloed than in past years

#### **Input from Long-Term Employee**

One staff member shared:

- They have worked at the University for over 20 years and have never attended.
- Did not feel this was the right forum to share personal reasons, but hinted that the space or atmosphere doesn’t feel appealing or comfortable.

### **Event Ownership & Scope**

- The event is not a Staff Senate event.
- It is run by Conferences & Events and is considered a President's Office event.
- It includes all staff and faculty, plus guests.

### **President's Position**

- Despite concerns about cost, Father strongly supports continuing the event.
- He views it as important for:
  - Building fellowship
  - Strengthening community
  - Showing appreciation for employees

He was open to ideas to increase interest and attendance.

### **Idea: Understanding the Decline Through a Survey**

Several participants noted:

- Without asking those who don't attend, it's hard to know what would bring them back.
- A short, 2–3 question form could help identify:
  - Why staff do or don't attend
  - What would make the event more appealing
  - Any barriers (cost perception, comfort, timing, accessibility, etc.)

### **Open question:**

Should this survey be issued by Staff Senate or by Conferences & Events?

### **Additional Observations**

- Staff appreciate the work that goes into the event and do not want that effort overlooked.
- The goal is not to criticize but to strengthen the sense of community the event is intended to support.

### **Agreed Next Step**

- A suggestion was made that Staff Senate should reach out to Conferences & Events to let them know the discussion occurred.
- Conferences & Events can decide whether to:
  - conduct a survey,
  - adjust the format,
  - or make other changes.

Kristi agreed to reach out to Franny and Bridget after the event so as not to add work during their busy preparation time.

## **New Business**

### **Planning the Spring Round Table**

#### **Requirement**

- Per the constitution and bylaws, Staff Senate must hold two roundtables per year—one each term, Fall and Spring.

#### **Format**

- Originally, each constituency held separate roundtables.
- This changed because MTP staff had limited computer access and could not easily host their own.
- Now, roundtables are held jointly across all constituencies.
- Many members expressed liking the combined format because it:
  - Builds community
  - Increases interaction across divisions

#### **Spring 2026 Planning**

- Kristi would like to schedule the spring roundtable and begin planning now.
- Looking for volunteers similar to last time (not an official committee).

#### **Volunteers**

- Melissa
- Melinda
- Lucy

#### **Possible Dates**

- Target: Early to mid-April, avoiding:
  - Easter (early this year)
  - Spring break
  - Late April / early May, when rooms become scarce due to commencement activities

#### **Next Step**

- Kristi will reach out to Patty for her availability, room scheduling, and to secure a date.

#### **My.Scranton Login & Access Issues**

Kristi has received multiple complaints about:

- Difficulty logging into My.Scranton
- Problems accessing Banner
- Issues transitioning from Duo to Microsoft Authenticator

She wanted to see how widespread the issues are.

#### **Reported Problems**

Participants shared many difficulties:

#### **Login Failures**

- Invalid username/password errors
- Frequent forced re-logins
- Being kicked out mid-session
- Difficulty accessing key functions such as:
  - Employee Dashboard
  - Time entry
  - Directories

### **Browser Problems**

- Some functions work in Edge but not Chrome, or vice versa.
- Constantly switching browsers is creating workflow delays.

### **Clearing Cache Constantly**

- Many users must regularly:
  - Clear cache
  - Clear browser history
  - Restart machines
- Some are doing this daily just to log in.

### **Authenticator Issues**

- Problems setting up or using Microsoft Authenticator.
- Duo-to-Microsoft transition causing inconsistencies.
- Especially problematic when accessing systems from home.

### **Server/Upgrade Complications**

A participant with technical insight shared:

- Recent server migrations (because old ones were unsupported) caused issues.
- Some Ellucian systems (like Degree Works) require separate browsers for QA vs. production.
- Ellucian has dropped support for Firefox.
- Session timers differ between Portal and Banner, contributing to unexpected timeouts.

### **Next Steps for Technical Issues**

- Anyone experiencing issues can report directly to IT or
- Staff Senate can collect issues and forward them as a consolidated report.

Because multiple people have complained to her, Kristi plans to collect:

- Specific error messages
- Browsers used
- Situational details (home vs. campus, Banner vs. My.Scranton)
- Frequency and patterns of the problems

She will then contact IT to communicate the concerns and ask for guidance.

## **Cabinet & Administrative Updates**

### **Cabinet Meeting Status**

- Due to the holiday schedule and Father's commitments, there has not been a formal Cabinet meeting since the last Senate meeting.
- Leadership work is still ongoing behind the scenes.

### **Financial Planning & Budget Work**

#### **Five-Year Financials**

- Leadership is actively refining the five-year financial projections.
- This work will intensify over the coming months.

#### **FY27 Budget Development**

- Work is beginning on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, even though it feels early.
- Staff Senate may want to invite Steve to a meeting, as he is best equipped to explain:
  - The new five-year model
  - How it will be used as a financial planning tool going forward

### **Strategic Plan, Mission Priorities & Middle States**

#### **Strategic Plan**

- The new strategic plan was approved by the Board in December.
- More communication about implementation will roll out as the semester begins.

#### **Mission Priority Examen**

- The Mission Priority Examen process is kicking off.

#### **Middle States Self-Study**

- Committees for the Middle States reaccreditation self-study are nearly finalized.
- Expect more updates in the spring.

### **Provost Search – Major Progress**

- Search is well underway.
- Interview schedule:
  - 4 interviews yesterday
  - 4 today
  - 2 tomorrow
- After interviews, the committee will make recommendations to Father Marina.
- Campus visits planned for February, with:
  - Open forums for Staff and Faculty
  - Opportunities for community feedback
- Goal: Make an offer before end of February.
- A campus-wide “save the dates” announcement will be sent as soon as permitted (likely next week).

### **Staff Salary Increase**

- Staff salary increase was effective December 27.
- It should have appeared in the last payroll.
- For questions:
  - Individual questions → Contact HR directly.
  - Broad questions → HR is happy to answer publicly.

### **Leadership Forum – Spring**

- Planning for another Leadership Forum is underway.
- Priority scheduling right now is for Provost candidate visits, so the forum date will be set once those are confirmed.
- Previous forum (September) focused on:
  - Finances
  - Strategic plan
  - Divisional leadership alignment

### **Lockdown Exercise**

- An institutional safety exercise will be held Friday, January 30 at 9:40 AM.
- This is not an active shooter drill.
- It is a conversation-based scenario:
  - Departments discuss actions they would take based on guidance in the training video.
- A memo and updated training video will be shared next week.
  - The prior video featured Chief Bergman, so it has been refreshed.

### **Follow-up Support**

- University Police will offer:
  - Department-level training sessions
  - Safety support or follow-up as needed

Past exercises resulted in useful improvements, like requests for internal door locks.

### **Retirement Vacation Policy Clarification**

A question was asked about whether employees retiring early in the year receive their full year's vacation.

### **HR Response**

- Yes—if the employee qualifies as a University retiree, they receive their entire annual vacation allotment, even if retiring as early as the first week of January.

### **Retiree Eligibility**

You qualify as a “retiree” under the following criteria:

- Age 55 + 20 years of service, or
- Age 62 + 10 years of service, or
- Age 65 (no years-of-service minimum)

## HR Notes

- HR acknowledges that the policy is unusual and not ideal from a staffing standpoint.
- However, the Staff Handbook explicitly supports this, so it remains in effect.

## HR Policy Clarifications & Additional Q&A – Summary

### Vacation Accrual and Payout – How It Works

#### Monthly Accrual Concept (20% per month)

- Vacation is front-loaded at the beginning of the calendar year for use.
- However, for *payout purposes* if someone leaves before retirement, the University uses a pro-rated monthly accrual model:
  - January → 20%
  - February → 20%
  - March → 20%
  - April → 20%
  - May → 20%
- Full yearly accrual = 100% by end of May.

#### If an employee leaves mid-year (non-retiree):

- Payout is pro-rated based on months completed.
  - Leave in February → 20% payout
  - Leave in March → 40% payout
  - Leave in April → 60% payout
  - etc.
- You do NOT receive the full year's vacation unless you meet the University's retiree criteria.

#### If an employee retires early in the year:

- Retirees receive 100% of their annual vacation allotment, even if leaving as early as January 3rd.
- This is unusual, but it is explicitly supported by the Staff Handbook.

## Retirement Eligibility & Benefits

### Who qualifies as an official University Retiree?

You are considered a retiree—and therefore eligible for full vacation payout and post-COBRA health coverage—if you meet any of the following:

- Age 55 + 20 years of service, OR
- Age 62 + 10 years of service, OR
- Age 65+ (no service minimum)

### What being a “retiree” means (benefit-wise):

- Ability to stay on the University's health insurance plan after the federally required 18 months of COBRA.

- You must pay 100% of the premium.
- Premiums will increase annually as usual.

#### **Important notes:**

- This policy rarely changes because:
  - Very few employees can afford to pay full premiums before Medicare eligibility (age 65).
  - Low participation means minimal impact on overall plan risk.
- Therefore, while technically subject to change, leadership has not discussed changing it, and there is no indication of short-term risk to this benefit.

#### **Age 62 + 10 Years Question**

A question was raised:

“What does 62 + 10 years actually *get* you?”

Answer:

- It allows the employee to qualify as a retiree even if not yet Medicare eligible.
- This is important because it enables access to continued University health coverage beyond COBRA.

#### **Faculty Contract Negotiations & the Provost Search**

##### **Faculty Contract Status**

- Patty realized she had omitted this update earlier:
  - Faculty negotiations have progressed very well, and the end appears to be near.
  - This is a positive development and may ease campus climate concerns for candidates.

##### **Impact on Provost Search**

- The committee completed the first round of interviews (4 yesterday, 4 today, 2 tomorrow).
- Candidates have not specifically raised faculty contract negotiations.
- However:
  - General campus culture *is* a topic of conversation with candidates.
  - Some candidates come from unionized campuses, but it varies.
  - The presence of faculty unions is not viewed as an unusual deterrent.

##### **Campus Visits**

- Planned for February.
- Community forums will be publicized soon.

#### **Discussion: Staff Salary Increase Timing, Communication, and Perceptions**

##### **Context of the Question**

A staff member referenced a forum, where participants discussed:

- Staff salary concerns

- Faculty/staff equity
- Timing and transparency of institutional decisions

The individual noted that:

- At the forum, leadership indicated they were not discussing layoffs—and shortly afterward the voluntary separation plan was announced.
- Leadership had previously emphasized avoiding a “great divide” between staff and faculty compensation.
- Therefore, when staff salary increases suddenly appeared, some people were appreciative but also confused or concerned about:
  - Why the increase happened abruptly
  - Whether it was linked to faculty negotiations
  - Whether it contradicted earlier messaging

The staff member felt unprepared to respond at the time and asked for clarification.

### **Patty’s Clarification & Explanation**

#### **No hidden motive or intrigue**

Patty emphasized:

- The Cabinet was being deliberate and thoughtful about when and whether to introduce staff increases.
- At a certain point, Father Marina decided it was time to move forward and did not want to delay any longer.
- The decision was not tied to any behind-the-scenes issue, nor was it part of a larger strategy.

#### **Message at the symposium was truthful at the time**

Patty confirmed:

- When leadership said there would not be an increase, that was accurate at that moment.
- Afterward, circumstances shifted, and Father Marina instructed HR and Cabinet to proceed with the increase.
- Patty emphasized there was no intent to mislead staff.

#### **Faculty contract negotiations**

Patty apologized for forgetting to mention this earlier and shared:

- Faculty negotiations have progressed very well, and things are moving toward resolution.
- The improved state of negotiations did not directly trigger the staff increase.

#### **Why decisions sometimes appear sudden**

Patty explained:

- Cabinet deliberations change quickly as new information emerges.
- Occasionally, leadership pivots from “no change” to “we must act now.”

- She acknowledged this can make decisions *look* inconsistent from the outside.

### **Decision-making priority**

- Leadership always tries to avoid unnecessary inequity between staff and faculty.
- However, future increases cannot be guaranteed to match between groups every year.
- The Cabinet genuinely tries to “do what they can for staff” within financial constraints.

### **Patty’s honesty about the internal process**

She shared candidly:

- She personally was surprised by some of the timing shifts, just as staff were.
- HR had to execute the salary increase quickly after being told it was suddenly moving forward.
- There was no hidden strategy, just evolving circumstances and leadership decisions.

### **Bottom Line Summary**

- The staff salary increase was not a reaction to faculty negotiations.
- There was no behind-the-scenes agenda or attempt to mislead staff.
- Messaging at the forum was accurate at the time; the decision changed afterward.
- Father Marina ultimately decided it was time to move forward and directed Cabinet to act.
- Leadership is aware that abrupt shifts can create confusion, but decisions reflect changing financial evaluations, not inconsistency of intent.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Communications Committee**

- No major updates at this time.
- A meeting has been scheduled to begin planning the Spring Communications Symposium.
- Committee members noted they will be prepared and available for the upcoming work.

### **Elections & Membership Committee**

- Preparing to review current representation numbers.
- This year the senate will have a large number of vacancies, due to:
  - Retirements
  - Resignations
  - Exhausted alternates

- Committee encourages Senate members to:
  - Identify colleagues who may be interested in serving
  - Personally reach out to potential candidates
- Hope that some current alternates who filled mid-term vacancies may choose to run for full seats.

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### **Finance Committee**

- Year-to-date spending: \$1,674.92
- Remaining balance: \$9,245.93
- Agency Fund balance: \$10,262
- Some anticipated charges (e.g., Christmas luncheon invoices) are not yet reflected due to timing delays.
- Finance Committee requested a \$2,000 transfer, which includes:
  - Luncheon proceeds (~\$1,873)
  - \$102.62 agency amount
  - Remaining balance from Staff Senate budget
- All paperwork for recent events—including catering invoices—has been processed, and updates should appear in next month's financial report.

### **Social Events & Community Building Committee**

- No new updates.
- Committee is taking a breather following the very successful December Staff Luncheon.
- Members expressed thanks for the positive feedback.

### **Staff Development Committee**

- No formal report (chair attending a service trip).
- Ongoing projects include:
  - Gathering materials for training and informational videos to post on the staff webpage.
  - Coordinating with various departments (including IT) to obtain screenshots and updated process information.
  - Exploring whether MIT has any reusable training videos that could be adapted for University use.

### **Staff Recognition & Excellence Committee**

- Committee will meet in the coming weeks to plan the Year-End Luncheon.

- Roseanne continues to manage Meg Cullen-Brown nominations, and the committee plans to meet with her to understand the full workflow for continuity.
- Quarter 1 Meg Cullen-Brown Award will be presented at the next Staff Senate meeting.
- Lunch tickets for award recipients:
  - Ordered from Dining Services.
  - Priced at \$10 each (two per awardee).
  - Current tickets expire in May; new tickets will be requested when Dining Services prints the next batch.

#### **Assessment Committee**

- No report provided.

#### **Items from the Floor**

- Christie noted she would also like to assist with the Spring Round Table.
- No additional floor items were raised.

#### **Motion to Adjourn**

- Motion to adjourn: Lucy
- Second: Melissa P.
- Meeting adjourned.

A brief side discussion followed regarding lunch pricing:

- Noted on Yammer: lunch available for \$8.50 during intersession.
- Current lunch ticket price remains \$10.
- Intersession pricing ends when the term begins (Wednesday, Jan. 28).