



Staff Senate Annual Report

2023-2024



STAFF SENATE

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Get Involved

The purpose of the UNL Staff Senate is to be an **advisory body on issues...**

institutional policies, and practices that relate to the staff, to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas, to promote common interests among the staff, to advocate for staff welfare and development, to suggest revisions and initiatives to improve staff policies, and to participate in the formulation of institutional policy and governance.



Your Staff Senate

Senators are elected by their peers to represent seven districts including Business and Finance, Chancellor, Academic Colleges, Student Affairs, Additional EVC's Offices, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Research. Additionally, the Staff Senate includes four ex-officio members from the NU System's Central Administration.



57

elected Staff Senators



9

standing committees



5

office/service staff members



52

managerial/professional staff members



17

senators have "director" in their job title



4,000+

staff assembly members

Executive Committee

Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

As President of the Staff Senate, I am pleased to present our Annual Report for this year. It has been a year of significant growth and progress, marked by our collective efforts to enhance the working environment for all staff members.

Throughout the year, we have addressed numerous concerns, ranging from parking issues and the use of paid time during winter shutdowns to the treatment of temporary workers and the need for better supervisor training. We have advocated for greater transparency in policy changes, navigated insurance change challenges, and partnered with campus stakeholders to build transparency and professional alliances. Additionally, we have emphasized the importance of clear communication to ensure collaboration and investment of all staff members.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Executive Committee and all our dedicated senators for their tireless work and commitment. Your efforts have been instrumental in our achievements, and your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace, advocating for staff concerns, and working collaboratively to address the challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

Sincerely,

Sara Haake

Sara Haake
Staff Senate President
University of Nebraska - Lincoln



**Sara
Haake**
President



**Jordan
Gonzales**
Vice President for
Internal Affairs



**Jessie
Brophy**
Vice President for
External Affairs



**Regina
Flowers**
Secretary



**Joann
Ross**
Executive
Secretary



ACCOMPLISHMENTS. SUCCESSES.

An amazing year of **positive impact** on the university

Celebrating the success of our inaugural year, the UNL Staff Senate has been a pillar of unity, advocacy and collaboration. The Staff Senate has emerged as a vital platform for connection and innovation, facilitating constructive dialogue between staff, faculty and administrators. Together, we have explored new ideas, forged lasting partnerships and recommended initiatives that will enrich the fabric of our university.

Our achievements showcase the dedication and passion of our members, and we are confident that the Staff Senate will continue to serve as a catalyst for positive change and progress at UNL.

The UNL Staff Senate crafted its inaugural strategy, outlining organization's goals, objectives and action plans to achieve long-term success. It provided a roadmap for ensuring coordinated efforts toward a common vision and guiding future growth.

3 AIMS

4 Strategic Initiatives

13 Action Items completed

AIM ONE: Elevate the prominence and establish the Staff Senate as THE representative body for university staff members.

STRATEGY: Increase visibility of Staff Senate on campus.

- ✓ Designed a Staff Senate brand with a graphic design (wordmark).
- ✓ Created a regularly released newsletter.
- ✓ Created a robust website with newsfeeds, resources, etc.
- ✓ Disseminated regular news releases.
- ✓ Hosted district-wide meetings in several districts.

AIM TWO: Provide tactical staff representation across campus by creating a mechanism for identifying opportunities to engage.

STRATEGY: Encourage all members of the campus community to engage with Staff Senate when needing staff representation.

- ✓ Participated in Academic Planning Committee meetings.
- ✓ Participated in and was keynote speaker at 2023 All Staff Conference
- ✓ Participated at New Employee Orientation.
- ✓ Participated at the Employee Wellness Fair.
- ✓ Met with the Chancellor and members of the Chancellor's Cabinet.

STRATEGY: Provide a formal mechanism for the university community to submit suggestions and request representation.

- ✓ Developed a feedback form embedded on the website.

AIM THREE: Assess staff sentiment.

STRATEGY: Receive feedback from all staff using a variety of methods; in person conversations, email exchanges, form letters, and web-based conversations with the opportunity for your identity to remain confidential.

- ✓ Developed a feedback form embedded on the website.
- ✓ Disseminated request for feedback through a variety of emails and newsletters.

Executive Committee

The Staff Senate Executive Committee had a remarkable first year marked by the establishment of robust connections, fruitful collaborations, and impactful partnerships. Through our concerted efforts, we have forged meaningful relationships across departments and disciplines, fostering a culture of cooperation and innovation. These achievements underscore our commitment to enhancing the UNL experience for all staff members and stakeholders, and we look forward to building upon this success in the years to come.

Connections. Collaborations. Partnerships.

> APC Meetings

The Academic Planning Committee (APC) took a significant step forward by including staff representation from the UNL Staff Senate for the first time. This change aimed to promote inclusive decision-making and ensure that staff perspectives and needs are directly reflected in the university's budgetary governance process.

> Big10 Collaboration on Staff Advocacy

The Big 10 Collaboration of Staff Advocacy provided a platform for connecting with our peers across the Big 10 Conference, aimed to facilitate collaboration among member institutions, enabling staff to better support each other and enhance their collective understanding of challenges in higher education.

> NU Staff Advisory Board

The NU Staff Advisory Board cultivated collaboration and communication among staff from all four campuses to collectively address shared concerns and foster mutual success.

> Commencement

For the first time, the Staff Senate took part in Commencement, both delivering a video message and joining the processional.

> Search Committees

The Staff Senate actively contributed to search committees for chancellor, vice chancellor of student affairs, and dean of libraries, showcasing dedication to providing valuable perspectives in selecting university leaders.

> Leadership Connections

The Staff Senate convened periodically with leadership, including the Chancellor, the Director for University Relations, the Vice Chancellor of Business and Finance, the Vice Chancellor of IANR, and others to discuss, address and collaborate on current issues and future endeavors. District 6 met with Vice Chancellor Mike Boehm bimonthly all year.

> New Employee Orientation

The Staff Senate participated in new employee orientation every other month to extend a warm welcome to new staff members and acquaint them with the Staff Senate.

“Leaders show up”
Jordan Gonzales, UNL Staff Senate Vice President for Internal Affairs

Communications Committee



The Communications Committee within the Staff Senate achieved outstanding progress this year by fostering transparency and delivering informative updates that resonate with staff members throughout Nebraska. Through their dedicated efforts, the committee has effectively reached a wide audience, ensuring staff across the state are well-informed and engaged. Their remarkable contributions have played a pivotal role in advancing the Senate's strategic goals, making them a standout and invaluable asset to our organization.



Website unveiled

The Staff Senate website serves as a hub for staff communication, fostering transparency and collaboration within the university community. The Communications Committee revamped the site's structure, established an archive for existing content and partnered with other committees, like the Election and Recognition Committees, to enhance communication channels.



Newsletter

The Staff Senate newsletter is a crucial communication tool, updating staff on university events and initiatives. They partnered with University Communications (UCOMM) to establish a listserv. They distribute a quarterly newsletter electronically and physically via PDF email. They also collaborate with Campus Partners for staff-relevant information.



400+ subscribers

Within its inaugural month, the Staff Senate newsletter garnered over 400 subscribers, swiftly becoming a widely embraced source of information and engagement for staff members across the university community.



Branding

The Communications Committee collaborated with the on-campus student journalism group BUOY to establish branding guidelines. They worked alongside UCOMM and the College of Arts and Sciences Marketing to design a logo, background images, and stickers.

Recognition Committee

Staff recognition is crucial for boosting morale, motivation and engagement, fostering a positive work culture, and ultimately contributing to institutional success and employee retention. The Recognition Committee successfully conceptualized, created and executed the entire awards and recognition process from scratch nurturing a supportive and rewarding environment for university staff.

> Identified existing awards

The Recognition Committee researched existing staff award programs across campus to identify potential award categories and criteria.



61

staff nominations received

> Proposed new awards

The Recognition Committee developed eight staff awards aligned with the University's N2025 Strategic Plan, reflecting its principle that every person and interaction matters. These awards recognize individuals who embody the aims of the plan in areas such as student experiences, research impact, problem-solving, engagement, inclusive excellence, professional development, staff advocacy, and customer service.



8

award categories

> Solicited nominations

The Recognition Committee devised a communication strategy to promote awareness of the new staff awards, encouraging nominations from entire university community.



16

awards presented

> Created nomination forms

The Recognition Committee created web-based nomination forms to accept award nominations creating the criteria for which nominations will be evaluated.

> Notified winners and nominators

The Recognition Committee ensured that both the winners and the nominators were promptly notified of the outcomes through direct communication.



> Celebrated award recipients

The Recognition Committee collaborated with the All Staff Conference Steering Committee to secure a venue and ensure a broad audience for announcing award winners and celebrating the recipients.

Personnel Affairs Committee



The Personnel Affairs Committee has undertaken crucial initiatives, playing a pivotal role in addressing staff-related matters within the organization. Their diligent efforts have contributed significantly to enhancing the welfare and professional development opportunities for staff members.

MP/OS Positions Evaluation

The Personnel Affairs Committee conducted research to understand the consistencies and discrepancies in Managerial/Professional (MP) and Office Service (OS) positions. The difference between these position types is not clear or obvious. There appears to be a need for better classification.

Bullying in the workplace

The Personnel Affairs Committee collaborated with the DEI Committee to spearhead the creation of policies addressing workplace bullying, underscoring commitment to fostering a safe and respectful environment for all staff members.

Staff Ombuds Position

The Personnel Affairs Committee partnered with the DEI Committee to support the establishment of a staff ombudsperson at UNL that provides a confidential resource for staff members to seek guidance, address concerns, and navigate workplace challenges in a fair and impartial manner.

Promotional Equity

The Personnel Affairs Committee working group made progress by collecting Big Ten career ladder and family policies and organizing them into a spreadsheet. Polls are currently being conducted with other Big Ten institutions to gather additional insights in the area of promotional equity throughout UNL.

Shutdown Leave Policy: Forced unpaid time off for new employees without adequate accrued vacation time

The Personnel Affairs Committee researched and deliberated on the shutdown leave policy, particularly the impacts on new staff members without adequate vacation time forcing employees to take unpaid leave. Further review was delegated to HR to develop training opportunities for staff to familiarize themselves with UNL policy and available options during shutdowns. While HR cannot decrease the number of individuals required to take unpaid leave during shutdowns, they will explore alternative options such as professional development, training, etc., to utilize this time effectively.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee



The DEI Committee focused on providing leadership to guide policies and practices that develop and maintain a diverse, equitable and fully inclusive workplace environment at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

The DEI Committee exists to (1) address policies and long-standing practices that perpetuate racism and inequity among staff on campus, (2) represent the Staff Senate in campus and regional committees and workshops about diversity, inclusion, and equity, (3) solicit information from and interact with the various diversity groups on campus and in the community in support of their goals, and (4) sponsor events and programs with other diversity groups on campus.

Equity Gaps Embedded in the Search Committee Process

The DEI Committee launched a taskforce to understand the existing equity gaps embedded in the search committee process. They met with leaders at the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance over a six-month period to understand why UNL requires racially and ethnically diverse employees—and employees with gender diversity—on public search committees.

UNL employees who identify as women and/or with racially minoritized backgrounds report being asked to serve on staff search committees more than their white male peers. Evidence indicates that women and racially minoritized employees are disproportionately affected by non-promotable tasks such as serving on staff search committees.

These conversations have enabled the Staff Senate DEI Committee to develop multiple pathways to address how women and racially minoritized staff can achieve parity with their white male peers and not be disproportionately disadvantaged by serving on search committees, a non-promotable task.

Council for Inclusive Excellence and Diversity

Jordan Gonzales, chair of the Staff Senate DEI Committee, was appointed to the UNL Council for Inclusive Excellence and Diversity to represent the Staff Senate. The Council for Inclusive Excellence and Diversity provides collective and organized thinking and action related to campus climate and DEI.

Address and Prevent Workplace Bullying and Harassment

The DEI Committee met with Dr. Susan Swearer, a world-renowned expert on bullying and harassment intervention—as well as with members of the Staff Senate Personnel Affairs Committee and the Chancellor’s Diversity Commissions—over a six-month period to understand what gaps and disparities exist at UNL that hinders staff from reporting workplace bullying and harassment.

UNL employees have reported instances of workplace bullying and harassment to both the Staff Senate and the Staff Senate DEI Committee. These reports are disproportionately high from staff who are classified under the “Office/Service” job category. Some employees acknowledged not feeling safe or comfortable reporting their experiences via existing reporting structures at UNL.

These conversations have enabled the DEI Committee to work with internal stakeholders with a focus on addressing workplace bullying and harassment. The committee and stakeholders are also examining the staff ombuds position.

Elections Committee

The Elections Committee was notably active this year, overseeing the inaugural elections for the Executive Committee, re-electing the Vice President of Internal Affairs due to the President stepping down, and re-electing the Secretary. They determined staggered term lengths for senators by surveying preferences. Additionally, they conducted district-wide elections across UNL to fill seats of vacating senators, which made up one-third of the entire body.

Executive Officer Elections
Conducted in-person elections for inaugural Executive Officers at the January 2023 orientation meeting

VP Elections
Conducted online nomination process and elections to fill vacant Vice President for Internal Affairs seat.

Senators Terms
Identified and implemented a process for requesting each initial Senator's term-length and assigning terms.

Secretary Elections
Conducted online nomination process and elections to fill vacant Secretary seat.

Communications
Drafted articles and website content to encourage nominations and promote elections for the Staff Senate.

District Nomintaions and Elections
Identified and implemented a process for seeking nominations and holding elections through Qualtrics.

2024 Officer Elections
Developed a process for in-person elections for executive committee officers at the July 2024 senate orientation.



staff senate nominations



number of open seats



seats filled



Bylaws Committee



The Bylaws Committee reviewed and recommended enhancements to the Staff Senate's operations, with a member also serving as parliamentary advisor. Notable amendments this year included:



Bylaw X.1.3.

expanding the Staff Assembly's composition to include Nebraska Extension staff.



Bylaw X.3.1.a

defining when senators' terms begin and end.



Bylaw X.3.3.

clarifying election procedures and timelines for better understanding.



Bylaw X.5.2.

refining the timeline for officer elections.



Bylaw X.5.3.

re-defining terms and eligibility of officers.



Bylaw X.5.3.a

clarifying succession plans for vacated officer seats.



Bylaw X.6.2.

defining months the Staff Senate Assembly meets and adding a July orientation.

Liaison Committee



The Liaison Committee was dedicated to promoting staff representation and engagement across campus. One of their primary objectives was to ensure that staff have a voice in decisions that affect them by securing representation on various committees and boards throughout the university.

> Secured staff representation on various campus committees, including:

- Police Advisory Committee
- Campus Recreation Advisory
- Council on Inclusive Excellence in Diversity
- Big Ten Collaboration on Staff Advocacy
- NU Staff Advisory Board
- Academic Planning Committee

> Established regular communications between various campus entities, including:

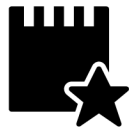
- ASUN
- Faculty Senate
- The Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Gender and Sexual Identities
- The Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women
- The Chancellor's Commission on the Status of People of Color

> Created reporting form

Developed a form to streamline the process of gathering valuable data and information. This form serves as a tool for efficiently collecting pertinent data points that can inform decision-making processes and enhance our understanding of various aspects within the university community.

Legislation Committee

The Legislation Committee met biweekly during the 2024 legislative session to discuss bills impacting the university, particularly staff. Updates were documented in minutes and/or shared at Staff Senate meetings.



14

Legislative Bills monitored,
including:



LB1330

Prohibiting certain DEI
initiatives at higher education
institutions



LB1064

Prohibiting NU Board of
Regents granting tenure

After extensive deliberation, the Legislation Committee decided to align with the University of Nebraska system's approach to informing UNL staff about these legislative matters, following consultation with the Executive Committee.



The NU Interim President testified in opposition at public hearings for LB1330 and LB1064, and both bills were retained in the Education Committee.

LEARNING. GROWING. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES.

Opportunities **create solutions**

The UNL Staff Senate has navigated a spectrum of challenges and opportunities. From addressing staff welfare amidst evolving campus dynamics to fostering inclusive policies, the Staff Senate encountered the complexities of enhancing staff engagement while grappling with budgetary constraints. Yet, these challenges have presented opportunities for advocacy, collaboration, and innovation, empowering the Staff Senate to actively shape the university's trajectory and promote a vibrant work environment.



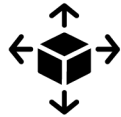
Staff Retention

Staff retention continues to pose a persistent challenge for the university, impacting the tenure of valuable employees. This issue, evident among members of the Staff Senate, has contributed to rising turnover rates and presents substantial barriers to cultivating a stable and proficient workforce.



50%

Turnover in elected Executive Committee Members



18%

Turnover of Staff Senators (10 of 57)



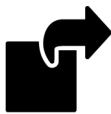
20%

of those who left Staff Senate left the university due to their position being eliminated



40%

of those who left Staff Senate cited workload capacity issues



20%

of those who left Staff Senate moved districts or changed roles (ie. moved to faculty)



20%

of those who left Staff Senate left the university altogether



Gathering Staff Issues, Ideas and Concerns



Throughout the inaugural year, Staff Senators received a wide array of information and feedback from UNL staff members. Concerns brought to the forefront included parking challenges such as the price, overselling lots, closure of lots/reduced parking options, and availability and enforcement of A lot usage. Concerns over the utilization of paid time during the winter shutdown and treatment of temporary workers were gathered and assigned to committees for additional support and resolutions. There was a strong call for enhanced supervisor training to ensure consistent and fair management across departments and units. A secondary issue to supervisor training were worries regarding the misuse of supervisory discretion, which many feel leads to unfair workplace practices. Staff members also expressed a desire for greater transparency in policy and budget changes to foster trust and clarity within the university. Staff Senate members continue to receive concerns on the complexities of recent insurance and prescription program, underscoring the need for clear communication and support before, during and after system wide changes occur.

Staff members have also brought solutions to the senate. A notable proposal was the revisioning of the UNL Staff Ombuds program to provide an impartial resource for conflict resolution. Another staff highlighted needs and a solution for service spots for Building System Maintenance and Facilities to be able to access buildings and their tools in a timely manner. Staff members with expertise in human resources, policy development and staff relations have become affiliate members to work with committees to move specific concerns forward or to build professional alliances with current UNL stakeholders that could help influence change. This inaugural year of the UNL Staff Senate has provided a strong foundation to gather, prioritize and collaborate with change catalysts to move staff challenges forward.

Staff Senate Recruitment and Representation



5

office/service staff members



52

managerial/professional staff members



17

senators have "director" in their job title

This year, the Staff Senate identified a significant difference in its membership, with a higher percentage of staff in managerial and professional roles, particularly those with "director" titles, compared to the number of staff in office and service positions.

To better understand if the Staff Senate represents the broader staff population, we need a more comprehensive understanding of the Staff Assembly's composition.

Currently, the Staff Senate consists of 52 managerial/professional members and 5 office/service members.

To ensure we are representative, we aim to:

- Better understand the composition of the Staff Assembly.
- Enhance Staff Senate's alignment with the Staff Assembly.
- Recruit staff members who properly represent the composition of staff members.



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
HOWARD L. HAWKS HALL

2024-2025 Goals

Launching into the 2024-2025 term, the UNL Staff Senate strides forward with purpose, aiming to tackle critical challenges while capitalizing on opportunities to uplift both the university’s work environment and its valued staff. Through collective action and forward-thinking, the Staff Senate is committed to nurturing an inclusive, growth-oriented culture marking the beginning of a new era of positive transformation and meaningful impact throughout the campus community.

Committee	Top Goal(s)
Bylaws	Amend bylaws to include NU System employees who work primarily at UNL into Staff Assembly.
Communications	<p>Establish a sustainable calendar for annual communications, develop a planning document to organize communication times and dates, and evaluate the most effective methods of communication.</p> <p>Implement a process for submitting communication requests across various platforms such as web, physical and social media and manage access for website changes and staff-wide communications.</p> <p>Expand newsletter by 1) increasing the number of staff receiving the newsletter and 2) to enrich its content to offer more comprehensive information to staff members.</p>
DEI	<p>Advocate for the establish an independent university staff ombuds position</p> <p>Promote the establishment of a workplace bullying prevention policy.</p> <p>Advocate for the creation a mental health and wellbeing survey.</p> <p>Address existing equity gaps embedded in the university’s search committee process.</p>
Elections	<p>Finalize elections process documents for future reference.</p> <p>Reassess district membership numbers to ensure representation.</p> <p>Develop and roll-out marketing to solicit more participation from Office/Service and out state staff members.</p>
Legislative	Stay informed and monitor state legislation that may affect UNL staff members.
Liaison	Enhance communication and collaboration by inviting representatives from other campus committees to present at assembly meetings to foster dialogue and ensure that staff perspectives are heard and considered in university-wide discussions and decision-making processes.
Personnel Affairs	<p>Promote the establishment of a workplace bullying prevention policy.</p> <p>Finalize report on promotional equity.</p>
Recognition	<p>Evaluate the 2024 awards and their categories.</p> <p>Create Rubrics that align with the awards.</p>

Acknowledgements

Staff Senators

Your commitment, passion and tireless dedication have made a profound impact on our organization and future generations of UNL staff senators. Your willingness to listen, engage, blaze new trails and collaborate have been instrumental in creating positive change and shaping the future of our this institution. Thank you for creating a path for future senators to follow as we collectively move forward.

Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs

Your passion for service and unwavering commitment to our shared mission has provided our committees with a strong foundation. Each of you undertook a leadership position that came without instructions, documentation, or lessons learned. As a chair/co-chair, your innate strengths to confront challenges and create success highlighted all the ways that you excel as a leader. Thank you for stepping forward and keeping the momentum going.

Executive Committee

Thank you to the Executive Committee for your incredible dedication and hard work. You couldn't have anticipated the time and personal sacrifices it would take to be successful, yet you have risen to the challenge with unwavering commitment. Your efforts have set a strong cornerstone for the future, and we are deeply grateful for all you have done.

UNL's Leadership Team

Thank you to our leadership team for your outstanding support throughout our inaugural year. Your resilience and strategic direction have been invaluable and we deeply appreciate your unwavering commitment and dedication to our staff senate's success.

Special Thanks To

Jessie Brophy for her dedication and superior work ethic to serve as the Vice President of External Affairs, Chair of the By-Laws Committee and as the author of this annual report. Jessie's passion for staff voice and transparency has been a vital part of the Staff Senate and Executive Committee.

Get Involved

UNL Staff Senate

Get involved with the UNL Staff Senate to advocate for staff concerns, access professional development, engage with the university community and shape policies, while gaining recognition and personal satisfaction from contributing to the university's success.



staffsenate.unl.edu



staffsenate@unl.edu



Newsletter signup
go.unl.edu/staffsubscribe



Submit a story
<https://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/staffsenate/submit>



Reach out
<https://staffsenate.unl.edu/contact-us/>