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The purpose of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (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.

The UNL Staff Assembly shall be comprised of any employee of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska Extension, and the University of Nebraska System not explicitly represented by the UNL Faculty Senate or other organized University of Nebraska entity, the graduate student assembly, or Association of Students of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (ASUN) whose role supports the activities and mission of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, has at least a 0.25 FTE, and does not have on-call status.

Your Staff Senate

Senators, who are elected by their peers, represent one of eight districts defined by the university's overall organization. Those districts are Business and Finance; Chancellor; Academic Colleges; Student Life; EVC Units; Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Research and Innovation; and University of Nebraska System. While senators are elected by district, each represents the full body of staff at UNL.



57

Elected Staff Senators



5

Office/Service staff members



11

Senators have "director" in their job title



Standing committees



48

Managerial/Professional staff members



Staff assembly members



Executive Committee

A Message from the President



Jordan Gonzales

President



Jessie Brophy

VP for Internal Affairs



Jerri Harner

VP for External Affairs



Morgan Green McConnell

Secretary



Sara Haake

Executive Advisor



Joann Ross

oordinator/Executive Secretary

Meeting the moment.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln community is witnessing an inflection point of critical change and transition. You've likely felt this turbulence recently during your daily interactions on our 500-mile campus. While change is to be expected for a university as large as ours, it seems the rate of change and uncertainty have increased exponentially.

Things will change. Transition will occur. Yet, our mission to ensure that every person and every interaction matters will remain steadfast.

This annual report articulates why the Staff Senate is uniquely equipped to meet the moment. This year, we launched the Task Force on Workplace Culture and Engagement, in addition to various committee-level initiatives impacting employees.

This Task Force aligns with President Gold's system-wide strategic plan and the extraordinary culture and environment pillar. The Task Force is also congruent with UNL's N2025 Strategic Plan with the aim to prioritize participation and professional development for all Nebraska employees.

I'm grateful to the 57 elected senators and 11 affiliate members who selflessly dedicated their time and talent to improve the workplace experience for our 4,512 talented and hard-working staff employees. We've made progress on all fronts, but the good work continues. We can meet the moment—together.

Jordan Gonzales

Staff Senate President

The Executive Committee



Jordan Gonzales President

President Gonzales empowers the staff voice as a member of the Chancellor's Leadership Cabinet and participates in budget decisions as an ex-officio member of the Academic Planning Committee. He previously served as the vice president for internal affairs and committee chairperson. Jordan's leadership style focuses on building trust through mutual respect, active listening, empathy, and transparent communication.



Jordan has been part of the University of Nebraska family for 12 years. Ten of those years have been dedicated to transforming alumni pride and loyalty into action and philanthropy to advance the university at the Nebraska Alumni Association. He's pursuing a Ph.D. at UNL and has a master's degree from UNL and a bachelor's degree from UNK.

A third-generation Nebraskan, Jordan grew up on a modest farm in the western panhandle. His pride and joy are playing with his two sons, Graham and Lincoln. He's an avid fan of Husker athletics and enjoys reading, listening to Dave Matthews Band and Grateful Dead, watching Star Wars movies, and running. He resides in Omaha with his wife and best friend, Ellen.

Jessie Brophy Vice President for Internal Affairs

Jessie Brophy is the Director of External Engagement and Legislative Affairs for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. With 25 years at UNL, including 11 in the IANR Vice Chancellor's Office, she leads legislative strategy, stakeholder engagement, and institutional outreach. As a member of the NU State Relations Council, Jessie serves as the legislative liaison for agriculture, natural resources, and rural prosperity, working directly with state senators, regents, the NU president's office, and key government and business leaders.

Now in her second year as a UNL Staff Senator, Jessie has served as vice president of external affairs and currently as vice president of internal affairs. In these roles, she has strengthened Staff Senate's presence and ensured meaningful representation across the university, NU system, and Big Ten. With a keen understanding of the impact on higher education in Nebraska and the importance of the land-grant mission, Jessie works to strengthen connections between the university, policymakers, and stakeholders to drive innovation, economic growth, and opportunities for all Nebraskans.





The Executive Committee



Jerri Harner Vice President for External Affairs

Jerri Harner is the program coordinator for Business and Finance at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she has been a dedicated member of the community since 2015. In addition to her current role, Jerri also serves as the vice president for external affairs for the UNL Staff Senate, demonstrating her commitment to the university and its staff. Her previous roles at UNL include serving as the executive specialist for the vice chancellor in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and as administrative associate to the director for the School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.



When asked about her favorite spot on campus, Jerri says, "The Maxwell Arboretum on East Campus, especially during the spring. It reminds me of my childhood in Germany, where my siblings and I would spend countless hours playing outside among the trees and forestry, hiding in the bushes and collecting berries." Jerri is inspired by her family, husband Jay, daughter Malayka and son Malachi. "They motivate me to show up as my best self each day. I strive to be a mother, wife, sister, and daughter that makes my family proud. I want to be someone who never gives up, follows God, and extends grace in every interaction and with every person I encounter."

Morgan Green Mcconnell Secretary

Morgan serves as the secretary for Staff Senate and an assistant director for residence life, where she is passionate about creating meaningful student experiences and empowering students to grow into confident, capable leaders. With eight years at the university, she has dedicated her career to fostering student success, building strong residential communities, and enhancing campus engagement. As part of her own professional development, Morgan is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in educational leadership and higher education at UNL.

Outside of work, Morgan is an avid runner, reality TV enthusiast, trivia lover, and passionate supporter of women's sports. This year, she is embracing an exciting personal challenge—training for her first marathon! She also loves cheering on the Huskers and discovering the best local ice cream spots with her husband. Whether it's logging miles on a long run, debating the latest reality show drama, or strategizing over a competitive board game, Morgan is always looking for her next adventure.





The Executive Committee





Sara Haake Executive Advisor

Sara is starting her third year as the dispatch director at the UNL Police Department and her tenth year as a UNL staff member. She leads an amazing team of staff that consistently demonstrate their desire to give back and invest in their community. Being a central hub for all types of assistance brings challenges and opportunities that you don't see in many professions. The team at UNLPD is uniquely talented in technologies, customer service and law enforcement practices. The agency is CALEA accredited because they believe in doing things to the best of their ability and in accordance with national standards. Working as the dispatch director has been an opportunity of a lifetime and one that Sara is very grateful for. Dispatching is near and dear to her heart and she is extremely proud to be a part of this hidden-gem profession.

Outside of work, Sara is lucky to have a wonderful family consisting of her husband Phil, children (Leigha and Grayson), and two dogs (Cash and Max). Phil is a project manager with Facilities Planning and Construction. They both enjoy working for the university and are honored to build their careers here.

Joann Ross Coordinator & Executive Secretary

As the Staff Senate coordinator, Joann keeps a record of the proceedings of the organization, including reports and the official membership roll. Additionally, she is responsible for the general correspondence and finances of the Senate and serves as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

Dr. Ross has taught for the Honors Program and Women's & Gender Studies since 2016. Her research and teaching interests fall at the intersection of legal history, women's history, and social history. From 2013-2022, Dr. Ross worked in UNL's Athletic Department, serving first as a learning specialist and then as an academic counselor. Prior to her time in Athletic Academics, she was a member of the history faculty at the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts in Natchitoches, LA., where she taught classes in history, gender studies, law studies, and government.





Mid-Year Progress Report

Published December 24, 2024

The purpose of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Staff Senate is to be an advisory body on issues, institutional policies, and practices that impact staff. Our focus is to promote common interests among staff, to advocate for staff welfare and development, and to participate in the formulation of institutional policy and governance.

We are confident we can improve the university's workplace culture and engagement experience for all staff employed at UNL if everyone—including you—actively participates in this process. Together, we can make the university a first-rate employer of choice. Together, we can ensure that every person and every interaction matters.

The current Staff Senate session began in July 2024. Our new and returning senators and affiliate members have been working hard to make UNL an exceptional place to work, learn, and grow. Halfway through the current session, we're proud to show you our progress and provide clear examples of how we have been advocating, supporting, and serving UNL staff over the last six months.

Mid-Year Progress Report

2024-2025



Created the Staff Senate Task Force on Workplace Culture and Engagement. This is our top priority over the next two years.

Collaborated with campus leaders and the Faculty Senate to support a modern and equitable family medical leave policy for employees. This system-wide policy went into effect July 1, 2025, after years of work by employees on all four campuses.





Launched an initiative to advocate for competitive staff salaries and benefits across all job classifications.

Worked with campus leaders and faculty experts to draft a proposed workplace bullying prevention policy.





Met with the key staff and administrative leaders to increase resources and support for staff mental health and well-being.

Advocated for the establishment of a standardized and transparent staff promotional equity process.





Coordinated with the Office of Organizational Development and Training to promote accessible professional development opportunities for staff.

Partnered with UNL HR leaders, experts, and professionals to reimagine the staff talent management experience.





Added a member of the Staff Senate to the Parking Advisory Committee.

Passed an inclusive bylaw amendment to enshrine voting rights for staff senators elected from the University of Nebraska System whose role supports the activities and mission of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.





Launched an initiative to increase staff representation in campus leadership opportunities, especially staff classified as office/service.

Established the Staff Senate Presidential Citation Award for Excellence, a new recognition for offices and departments for going above and beyond to advance the university.





Planned meetings between the Staff Senate and numerous Staff Councils within the academic colleges to collaborate more efficiently, facilitated by Senator Celeste Spier.

Launched a blueprint for staff senators to engage more easily and intentionally with campus constituents and leadership, championed by Co-Chairs Derek McConnell and Alisa Smith and members of the Communications Committee.





Updated the Staff Senate website and provided periodic updates to better communicate and gather input from our over 4,500 staff members.

Discussed ways to make campus safer for pedestrians and students riding electronic scooters.





Executive Committee

→ Past Year Highlights

This is the first year that the Executive Committee has had the same officers for the entirety of the session. The committee is proud to report **increased communication** and transparency from Staff Senate President Jordan Gonzales to the broader staff community, and the inclusion of subject matter experts into bi-monthly assembly meetings. We also **expanded staff access** by inviting all UNL employees to attend Staff Senate meetings online via Zoom. The Staff Senate president is now included in the university's commencement ceremonies with institutional leadership and is a participating **member of the Chancellor's Leadership Cabinet**. Finally, Staff Senate led the initiative for **regular collaboration with the Faculty Senate and Student Governance** (ASUN, GSA), and secured placement of a Staff Senate representative on the Parking Advisory Committee.

Status Update

Staff Representation between M/P and O/S

In its ongoing mission to be truly representative of the UNL staff, the Staff Senate has strategically prioritized increasing the participation of employees categorized as office and service. Through the deliberate efforts of the Executive and Election Committees, including direct engagement and tailored communication, the Senate has successfully broadened outreach to this group. This intentional focus underscores the Senate's continuous commitment to ensuring equitable representation across all staff classifications.

Upcoming Goals

The Executive Commitee will comprehensively address the needs of the university staff and will deepen its engagement with the Staff Senate to proactively identify and collaboratively address key issues impacting staff mental health and well-being, professional development, and overall work environment, while simultaneously implementing strategies to significantly increase staff participation in the Senate's activities and decision-making processes.

"The Staff Senate Executive Committee serves a unique role—leading and representing with vision and integrity, while skillfully balancing their own responsibilities to inspire progress for all."

-Jordan Gonzales, District 2 Senator, Staff Senate President

Bylaws Committee

Past Year Highlights

The significant accomplishments of the Bylaws Committee are almost entirely related to proposed and adopted changes to the Staff Senate Bylaws. Over the past year, the Bylaws Committee proposed the following bylaw changes that were adopted:

Bylaw X.1.3. and **Bylaw X.4.1.** – The Senate adopted bylaw updates to extend full membership and voting rights to staff senators elected from the University of Nebraska System whose role supports the activities and mission of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Bylaw X.3.2. – The Senate adopted a bylaw to increase the number of staff senators from 53 to 57 in response to the University of Nebraska System ex-officio senators being given full membership and voting rights.

Bylaws X.3.5., X.3.5.A., and X.3.5.B. – The Senate adopted bylaws to help the president and the Executive Committee fill vacant Staff Senate seats to ensure that all the districts of the staff assembly have adequate representation within the Senate.

Bylaw X.5.10. – The senate adopted a bylaw to assign the role of keeping a history of bylaw changes to the executive secretary.

While some might not consider it a success, the Bylaws Committee is proud of the support we provided to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee as they attempted to update the Bylaws that name and govern their committee. We know that the proposal was tabled indefinitely, but we want to acknowledge the time spent getting the proposal ready for the Senate.

We also worked with the Executive Secretary and the Communications Committee to ensure that the Staff Senate Bylaws reported on the Staff Senate website are accurate with the amended and added language.

"Being part of the Bylaws Committee has expanded my perspective. There is a lot of value in creating policies that impact all staff at our institution."

-Jena Johnson, District 2 Senator

Bylaws Committee

Status Update

New Full Staff Senators

Our goal was to investigate making the University of Nebraska System staff tied to UNL and elected as ex-officio members of the Senate into full staff senators. We **completed this goal** by the November 2024 Staff Senate meeting with the adoption of updates to Bylaws X.1.3. and X.4.1.

Proposing New or Updated Bylaws

Our goal was to support the running of the Staff Senate by accepting and supporting proposed bylaw changes and by proposing new or updated bylaws. While this goal is impossible to fully complete, the committee co-chairs feel that we have **kept the committee aligned with this goal.** We look forward to continuing to be committed to this goal in the future.

Upcoming Goals

Adjust to having Bylaws Committee members volunteer to serve in the active role as parliamentary advisor during Staff Senate meetings.

Support the running of the Staff Senate by accepting and supporting proposed bylaw changes and by proposing new or updated bylaws.

"I enjoy working on the Bylaws Committee. It is a good feeling to know that I am helping to set the foundation of how the Staff Senate functions. Things we are working on now will be the structure on which Staff Senate will rely for years to come."

-Blake France, District 8 Senator

Recognition Committee

Past Year Highlights

The Recognition Committee has continued progress in managing the nomination process and selection of the eight staff awards given annually. These awards recognize individuals who embody the aims of the N2025 Strategic Plan in areas such as student experiences, research impact, problem-solving, engagement, inclusive excellence, professional development, staff advocacy, and customer service.

The Recognition Committee also launched the Staff Senate Presidential Citation Award to recognize deserving offices, departments, and units for going above and beyond to improve the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This award is conferred by the Staff Senate president, reviewed by the Recognition Committee and recognized at Staff Senate assembly meetings.

Status Update

Award Categories

The Committee's goal this year was to reevaluate the award categories for the annual awards, adjust the rubric for reviewing awards, and review the nomination forms for any edits from last year. The committee accomplished these goals and looks forward to another year of recognizing our staff on campus for the great work they do at this year's All-Staff Conference.

Upcoming Goals

Our goals for the upcoming year are to:

- Increase the number of nominations we receive for both the annual awards and the Presidential Citation Award for Excellence.
- Continue recognizing deserving offices, departments, and units with the Staff Senate Presidential Citation Award.

The Recognition Committee's work is crucial to fostering a culture that celebrates the work of staff at the university. A lot of the work that is done by staff often goes without reward or recognition, so it's an honor to help highlight the good things that are being done on campus every day."

-Hilary Butler, District 2 Senator

Communications Committee

→ Past Year Highlights

Over the past year, significant strides have been made in **enhancing communication channels and expanding outreach efforts** for the Staff Senate. The website has been continuously developed to serve as a comprehensive resource, with dedicated sections for Elections and Recognition to better inform and engage staff. Collaboration with various committees has strengthened the website's role in facilitating communication, while ongoing efforts to enrich informational areas ensure that staff have easy access to essential Senate updates. The quarterly newsletter has also seen substantial growth, expanding out our listserv with **nearly 700 subscribers**. Distributed both electronically and physically, the newsletter has become a key tool for keeping staff informed, and ongoing collaborations with campus partners help ensure relevant and timely content.

In addition to these advancements, structured communication efforts have been implemented to foster clarity and consistency. A **sustainable communication calendar** has been created to manage recurring messages and highlight key outreach periods. Furthermore, standardized templates and guidelines now support Senate members in effectively engaging with Deans, Directors, and Vice Chancellors, their respective districts and peers.

Status Update

Continued Development of the Website

- Collaborated with other committees to use the website for better communication (i.e., Election Committee and Recognition Committee).
- Built out the elections webpage and the recognition webpage.
- Continued to build informational areas of website to provide a comprehensive source for Staff Senate Information.

"The first mistake is never the one that ruins you. It is the spiral of repeated mistakes that follows. Missing one is an accident. Missing twice is the start of a new habit."

-Jordan Gonzales, 3-2-1 Highlight, March 24, 2025

Communications Committee

Status Update

Newsletter

- Expanded to nearly 700 subscriptions.
- Created a newsletter for quarterly distribution both electronically (listserv) and physically (pdf download available for print from our website).
- Working with campus partners to get information that is relevant to staff.

Communication Calendar

- Created a sustainable calendar of annual communication with timelines recurring communications.
- Have a document that has the layout or busy communication times/dates.
- Consider the best method/means of communication.

Senate Communications

- Created templates and guidelines for Senators to communicate with others
 - o Guidelines for communication with Deans, Directors, and Vice Chancellors.
 - Identified opportunities for communication within the Districts to peers.
 - Established peer-to-peer talking points and shared information.

Upcoming Goals

"Ticketing" Process

- Develop a process for submitting communication requests using UNL ITS ticketing process (i.e., web, social, physical).
 - Managing access for website changes and staff-wide communications.

Newsletter Expansion

- Continue to grow the amount of staff who receive the newsletter.
- Broaden newsletter content to provide better information to staff.

Elections Committee

Past Year Highlights

The Elections Committee reviewed the process used to determine seat allocation prior to the 2025 election cycle. Due to time constraints, it was determined to maintain the current allocation for 2025 elections and work to devise a new allocation method prior to the 2026 election cycle. In the process of formalizing an allocation method, the committee has the goal of ensuring better representation for Office/Service staff members.

Status Update

Officer Elections were conducted at the July 2024 Staff Senate orientation meeting.

District representation review was performed, but due to time constraints and the need to incorporate a method of ensuring better representation for Office/Service staff members, it was determined to maintain current seat allocation for the 2025 election cycle.

In the 2025 Election Cycle, **119 nominations were received for 25 vacant senate seats.** A total of 65 UNL staff members agreed to run for election. The Elections Committee is encouraged by the number of staff members willing to serve the greater UNL staff community by running for election to staff senate.

Upcoming Goals

Determine, propose, and finalize a seat allocation method that can adapt to changing staff numbers without reducing the overall senate size and will provide opportunity for better representation of Office/Service staff members.

"At UNL, where 'Every Person and Every Interaction Matters,' serving on the Elections Committee means I get to participate in the work of bringing varied perspectives to the table - toward the ultimate goal of ensuring all staff constituents are fairly represented. Every voice is valuable. We hope you will join us in sharing your unique insights and encouraging others to do the same."

-Jaclyn Tan, District 7 Senator

Liaison Committee

→ Past Year Highlights

Overarching Goal: Evaluate our current list of campus committees that lack Staff Senate representation to determine whether the committee still meets and, if so, who the contact point would be to explore adding representation from the Staff Senate.

Amplifying Voices: 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.

• At present, representatives from campus units and committees that can provide information relevant to the needs of staff senators are regularly being invited to assembly meetings, so we feel that this goal has been met.

Status Update

Liaison Committee staff senators equally assumed responsibility in identifying committee and board representatives on various committees and boards. In the past year we have:

- Secured Staff Senate representation on Parking Advisory Committee.
- Compile Staff Senate committee reports for bi-monthly meetings.

Upcoming Goals

We are in the process of evaluating our current list of campus committees that lack Staff Senate representation to determine whether the committee still meets and, if so, who the contact point would be to explore adding representation from the Staff Senate.

Personnel Affairs Committee

→ Past Year Highlights

Increased meetings with UNL HR staff experts to discuss and address issues relating to job classification, pay, and compensation.

→ Status Update

Develop promotional equity proposal

Work on this goal focuses on advocating for templates for departmental use that also has the knowledgeable input of university HR experts.

→ Upcoming Goals

Advance proposals for career ladders with HR support that provide a uniform tool for departments to use.

Enhance communications between staff and university HR on the work being done on job classification reviews.

Advance a bullying in the workplace proposal by partnering with other campus governing bodies for input and consideration.

"Gratitude to the various staff senators and affiliate members who helped volunteer at the spring commencement ceremonies to make the events successful. This includes Sara Haake, Tony Lazarowicz, Hilary Butler, Doug Pellatz, Alisa Smith, Jeff Sheldon, and several others. Thanks for representing the very best of the university community!"

-Jordan Gonzales, 3-2-1 Highlight, June 2, 2025

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

Past Year Highlights

Submitted bylaws proposal to change committee name and update language on tasks performed by the committee.

Ian Edgington chaired the **Anti-Bullying Subcommittee.** The subcommittee is a collaborative partnership between the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion and the Personnel Affairs Committees. Its focus is to examine issues of workplace bullying, as a result of several employees bringing this to our attention. The subcommittee is compromised of staff members from other departments who help bring in more perspectives. We worked on **two major proposals**.

The first was to create a bullying policy to help address the gray area that bullying often falls into when it doesn't rise to the level of actionable conduct. We worked with professionals at the university and compared our current policies to those of our Big Ten peer institutions. The policy is hopefully nearing completion to be submitted for review to university administrators. The second proposal was the **creation of an independent staff ombudsperson** to handle informal conflict resolution, which would be a great pairing with the bullying policy. A staff member already had a policy proposal for this position, so we have partnered with her to help advance that.

We supported students when they felt unheard and dismissed, and we reached out to different departments across campus so they could share their views.

We spoke with the Faculty Senate members to learn and hear their views and perspectives.

"Our commitment to advocacy and allyship remains constant."

-Committee Member

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

Status Update

Establish an independent University Staff Ombuds

The work on this initiative continues through the anti-bullying subcommittee, chaired by member Ian Edgington.

Create a Mental Health and Well-Being Proposal

This became a larger initiative with more stakeholders, so it is not under the purview of the DEI Committee any longer.

Address Existing Equity Gaps Embedded in the Search Committee Process

Per current regulations from the State of Nebraska, no further action is available.

Upcoming Goals

Review gaps in campus culture and environment and relaunch this committee to address these issues as it pertains to staff in Fall 2025.

3-2-1 Highlight *March* 24, 2025

Beth Barry (District 1) was a recipient of the Women of Service Award at the Power of Husker Women event. She was also featured on Nebraska Today. Thanks for ensuring every person and every interaction matters!



Supporting Objectives

The purpose of the Task Force is to provide a strategic direction for the Staff Senate over the next two years and focus on **nine distinct objectives** to improve the workplace culture and engagement experience for all UNL staff.

This Task Force aligns with President Gold's system-wide strategic plan, specifically **pillar four, focused on Extraordinary Culture and Environment.** The Task Force is also congruent with UNL's N2025 Strategic Plan with the aim to **prioritize participants and professional development for all Nebraska students, staff, and faculty.**

While achieving these nine objectives may take longer than two years, they are a central focus for the Staff Senate and our valued partners across the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Nebraska System. Improving the university's workplace culture and engagement is critical to recruiting and retaining top-tier staff.

Workplace culture is defined as the overall atmosphere and environment of an organization as experienced by its employees. It's made up of the values, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and interactions of the people who work there. Some traits of a positive workplace culture include trust and psychological safety, a sense of belonging, professional development opportunities, and support for mental health and well-being.

Workplace engagement is defined as how committed and invested employees are in their day-to-day work and the overall success of their organization. It's about feeling connected, motivated, and passionate about the organization's goals. Some traits of positive workplace engagement include lower absenteeism, lower turnover, fewer safety incidents and accidents, higher productivity, and higher customer and client satisfaction.

Advocate for the implementation of a modern, family-friendly parental leave policy

Key Contact: Jordan Gonzales, District 2 In conjunction with the Executive Committee

Collaborate with university leaders, the Faculty Senate, and the Board of Regents as appropriate to grant full-time employees holding administrative, managerial/professional, office/service, or post-doctoral appointments up to a total of eight workweeks of paid leave for the care of a newborn; period of incapacity, prenatal care, or serious health condition related to childbearing; care for a birth parent; or adoption.



Support competitive salaries and equitable benefits for staff across all job classifications

Key Contact: Sara Haake, District 1
In conjunction with the Personnel Affairs Committee

Enhance collaboration with UNL Human Resources leaders to ensure staff salary and benefits are competitive, equitable, and aligned with the organization's goals.

Additional Strategies: Collaborate with and learn from UNL Human Resource leaders to...

- 1. Support HR in developing a class/comp philosophy and job architecture proposal for staff positives and in seeking approval from UNL leadership.
- 2. Aid HR in identifying and coordinating equity increases as appropriate
- 3. Encourage and partner with HR to strengthen benefits such as sick leave and vacation accrual rates across all staff job classifications.





Promote policies and initiatives to reduce workplace harassment and bullying

Key Contact: Ian Edgington, District 5
In conjunction with the Personnel Affairs Committee

Collaborate with and learn from UNL's Office of Institutional Equity & Compliance and the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor to advocate for hiring an independent staff ombudsperson and support the establishment of a workplace anti-bullying policy.



Support the increased utilization and expansion of staff mental health and wellbeing resources

Key Contact: Annalisa Davenport, District 4
In conjunction with the Personnel Affairs Committee and Communications Committee

Collaborate with UNL mental health, wellness, and well-being experts to identify key issues and develop targeted initiatives to create a healthier, more supportive work environment that contributes to better staff retention, productivity, and satisfaction.

Additional Strategies: Collaborate with and learn from UNL mental health, wellness, and well-being leaders and experts to...

- 1.Increase strategic communication on existing mental health, wellness, and well being resources to educate current employees
- 2. Develop an online training program for supervisors to prevent employee burnout and work-life balance
- 3. Hire one additional licensed counselor within the Employee Assistance Program
- 4. Provide an incentivized discount to employees for using campus recreation facilities regularly to improve their physical and mental health and well-being.



Advocate for a standardized and transparent promotional process

Key Contact: Spencer Hall, District 3
In conjunction with the Personnel Affairs Committee

Collaborate with UNL Human Resources leaders to ensure that promotions are absed on merit, qualifications, and performance rather than on factors such as personal connections or biases. Design a system for promoting employees that is fair, impartial, and transparent.

Additional Strategies: Collaborate with and learn from UNL Human Resources leaders to...

- 1. Migrate towards a staff classification structure based on job profiles/templates and career ladders rather than individualized job descriptions
- 2. Develop template/format for job profiles
- 3. Develop a general framework for career ladders that can be used for staff career ladders
- 4. Develop career ladder proposal with estimated costs for UNL leadership review



Improve leadership opportunities for staff classified as Office/Service within the Staff Senate

Key Contact: Jessie Brophy, District 6
In conjunction with the Executive Committee, Elections Committee, & Liaison Committee

Increase the number of office/service staff elected or appointed to the Staff Senate from 9% in July 2024 to at least 20% by July 2025 and at least 30% by July 2026.

Additional Strategies: Work with Staff Councils and the University of Nebraska Office Professionals Association (UNOPA) to help increase the number of office/service staff senators.

3-2-1 Highlight *March* 24, 2025

Mikki Sandin (District 3) was honored at the 37th annual Family and Friends Recognition Awards. Mikki's efforts continue to have a positive impact on students.



Increase staff recognition and awards

Key Contact: Morgan Green McConnell, District 4
In conjunction with the Recognition Committee

Incorporate a new monthly award, the Staff Senate President's Citation Award for Staff Excellence, to recognize offices or departments that ensure every person and every interaction matters.

Additional Strategies: Work with the Staff Senate Recognition Committee to update the names of the eight staff awards as the N2025 strategic plan concludes. Ensure the eight staff awards align with UNL's new strategic plan.



Increase awareness of accessible professional development opportunities for staff

Key Contact: Morgan Green McConnell, District 4
In conjunction with the Personal Affairs Committee, the Communications Committee,
& the Bylaws Committee

Work with the Office of Organization Development and Training, Staff Councils, and other vital campus stakeholders to amplify professional development opportunities for staff.

Additional Strategies: This goal will be achieved by...

- 1. Exploring the creation of a Staff Senate Professional Development Committee (abandoned)
- 2. Help and assist the Office of Organizational Development and Training to relaunch and update the Staff Leadership Academy



The Reminder

"Priorities are like arms...if you think you have more than a couple, you're either lying or crazy."

-Merlin Mann

Advocate for an improved talent management experience

Key Contact: Jerri Harner, District 1 In conjunction with the Personal Affairs Committee

Work with UNL Human Resources leaders and the Office of Organizational Development and Training to advocate for an enhanced talent management process to improve ways for the university to recruit, hire, onboard, develop, and retain staff.

Additional Strategies: Support the implemntation of...

- 1. Exit interviews
- 2.Incorporating a coaching/development option into the performance management process for campus



Sara Haake - Executive Advisor



"Fulfilling the Executive Advisor role this year has been an honor. It has been inspiring to see other leaders grow into new roles. It was more of a challenge to step into a supporting role than I first thought. However, the opportunities I've had to support and grow in different ways has been powerful and meaningful. I am grateful to be a part of Staff Senate and continue to be in awe of the dedication, leadership, and work ethic of every staff member at UNL."



University Communications & Marketing

Staff Senate Recognition

The Staff Senate Recognition Committee developed eight staff awards that connect to the aims and overarching principle of the University's N2O25 Strategic Plan that **every person and every interaction matters**. These annual staff awards will be awarded to individuals that exemplify an aim or the overarching principle of the University's N2O25 Strategic Plan.



Student Experiences

Dan Hudson Lisa Rohde



Research Impact

Tyler Frederick Allyn Pella



Problem Solver

Phyllis Schwab Lydia Coulson



Engagement

Julia Reiling Christa Rahl



Inclusive Excellence

Kim Smith William Struckmeyer



Professional Development

Natalie Becerra Morgan Green McConnell



Staff Advocacy

Eva Bachman Haley Hamel



Customer Service

Lynnette Sallinger Kim Wellsandt

Presidential Citation Award

The Staff Senate Presidential Citation Award for Excellence recognizes deserving offices, departments, and units for going **above and beyond to improve the University of Nebraska-Lincoln**. The award is conferred by the Staff Senate President and is reviewed and awarded by the Staff Senate Recognition Committee. Recipients receive a framed certificate and are invited to a Staff Senate Assembly meeting to be recognized.

Police Department

Despite being understaffed and taking on multiple roles, during the 2024 home football season, UNLPD demonstrated an unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety of the university community, athletes, and thousands of visitors.

Nebraska Extension

Nebraska Extension embodies the university's land-grant mission by positively transforming local communities in each of the state's 93 counties through education, innovation, and impact.

Sheldon Museum of Art

The Sheldon Museum of Art staff engages students, staff and faculty to explore art's potential to spark awareness and engagement within the local community and democratic society as a whole.

Institutional Equity and Compliance

The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance helps provide accessibility and inclusive accommodations to staff at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program provides confidential assessment, short term counseling and referral for university employees and their immediate family members at no charge.

Landscape Services

Landscape Services' efforts to clean up the campus and restore building operations were instrumental in the aftermath of the July 31 storm.

Office of Graduate Admissions & Office of Undergraduate Admissions

The team's individual and collective actions fueled an increase in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's student body to 23,992 students.

University Communications

The team's individual and collective actions produced the "Home Again" television commercial to celebrate and showcase the university.

Division of Student Life

The team's individual and collective actions created an unforgettable Homecoming experience for all at the university.

Get Involved

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

website

staffsenate@unl.edu

email

go.unl.edu/staffsubscribe

newsletter signup

https://staffsenate.unl.edu/contact-us/

reach out

https://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/staffsenate/submit

submit a story

Acknowledgements

Special Thanks to...

Staff Senators
Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs
Executive Committee
UNL's Leadership Team

Jerri Harner for her time, talent, and dedication as the Vice President of External Affairs, Chair of the University of Nebraska Staff Advisory Board, and as the lead author of this annual report. Jerri's commitment to amplifying the staff voice and enhancing transparency has been a vital part of the success experienced by the Staff Senate and the Executive Committee. Thank you, Jerri!

A Special Thank You



Kayli Pham

ODT Student Worker

The UNL Staff Senate expresses its sincere gratitude to Kayli Pham for her invaluable contributions to the creation of this Annual Report.

Kayli Pham served as the student employee for Organizational Development & Training during the Spring 2025 semester, working closely with Jerri Harner on various presentations and programs. Her dedication and expertise were instrumental in compiling and designing this report.

Kayli received her bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences & Disorders in May 2025. Her involvement at UNL extended beyond her role in ODT, as she was also an active member of the UNL Speech & Debate team, Innocents Society, Honors Program, and contributed to research within the Sensorimotor Integration & Swallowing Communications Lab.

The Staff Senate wishes Kayli the best as she continues her academic journey at UNL, where she will pursue her master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology beginning in the fall.