

2020 WASC Accreditation Review

Statement from the SJSU Staff Council

The SJSU Staff Council was initially formed by individual staff efforts and word-of-mouth in February 2018. By October 2019, Staff Council had established bylaws and began to engage more collectively with campus leadership. Staff Council is currently composed of voting members, an Executive Committee of five officers [chair, vice chair, registrar, treasurer, and social organizer], and one standing committee for Staff Recognition. We have set up an official university website [<https://sjsu.edu/staff-council>] and our department is housed under University Personnel with a clearly designated approving structure for financial transactions. The Staff Council mailing list has been used to: (1) disseminate news to SJSU staff, (2) solicit input on campus initiatives; (3) provide a collective voice in regards to staff ideas, feedback, and concerns; and (4) recruit staff volunteers for university committees.

Staff Communication

I am pleased to say that the Staff Council was quickly recognized as a valuable campus entity. In October 2019, Staff Council and the Office of the President announced a new annual staff award program (see Staff Recognition below) and in January 2020, the Chair was asked to speak at a university press conference related to staff, faculty, and student housing insecurities. The Chair has further been called upon to provide a staff perspective on new campus initiatives and to discuss broader participation in the SJSU Academic Senate. These efforts collectively have increased feelings of engagement, respect, and appreciation among our staff members and contributes to a stronger sense of community and belonging.

Staff Council is being supported financially by the university and recently received a \$500 base budget for its operation and recruitment efforts. Recruitment is an area of concern since staff need to opt-in to the mailing list and this relies heavily on word-of-mouth. University Personnel has assisted with recruitment efforts by highlighting the SJSU Staff Council during New Employee Onboarding Presentations and also by sending Staff Council announcements (upon request) to all staff employees. The Staff Council has also been contacting all new hires to encourage them to join the mailing list. We allow all employees to join the mailing list, but only staff (non-manager) employees are given voting rights within the Staff Council. The Staff Council monthly meetings have become an important space to discuss staff perspectives, brainstorm ideas, and socialize outside of our regular work environment.

As we actively seek to increase participation in the Staff Council, we have also been considering extended membership rights to staff in our campus auxiliary units. The President's Cabinet and the Staff Council Executive Committee have been dialoguing about whether SJSU auxiliary employees should be included in Staff Council initiatives. These discussions have been productive and the Staff Council Executive Committee will soon be proposing that we amend the bylaws to officially include auxiliary employees. This amendment must be approved by a two-thirds majority of eligible staff in attendance at the meeting. If approved, it will encourage a broader range of staff perspectives and foster a sense of belonging to ALL staff that work for or are affiliated with our university.

Staff Recognition

In October 2019, the Staff Council's Staff Recognition Committee drafted a proposal for three annual staff awards: Staff of the Year; Distinguished Service; and Spartan Spirit. The intent of these awards was to recognize exceptional staff on our campus who might not otherwise be acknowledged for their contributions. There have been long-standing concerns that while staff must support the base operations of the university, they may not receive recognition for their work or even be acknowledged

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for contributing to the success of campus initiatives. The Staff Council was very excited to launch the Annual Staff Award program and oversee its administration. It was agreed that there would be one primary winner and two honorable mentions for each award category; in total, 9 staff members are honored each year and presented with monetary awards and plaques. Nominations must be submitted in the fall, and then are independently reviewed by representatives from each of our staff unions. While the awards are funded by the Office of the President, the standing committees are primarily run by staff volunteers.

The first annual awards were presented during the March 2020 Spartan Service Celebration and it was a very rewarding experience. The staff were exuberant and in high spirits throughout the celebration event. The honorees gave heart-felt testimonials about how it felt to be honored for their years of service. The nomination process for the second annual award has concluded and the nominations are currently being reviewed. We anticipate an exciting virtual celebration for these awards in March 2021. We are especially grateful for the support of University Personnel, which organizes the annual Spartan Service Celebration and coordinates the majority of the award ceremony presentations.

Future Goals

- **The Staff Council wants to increase membership to 50% of all staff employees.** We currently have 8% of all staff employees registered for our mailing list. However, we face specific challenges with recruitment/engagement because not all of our staff employees work in office environments. We have dozens of tradespersons, physicians, and police that may not have the same access or availability to engage with our Staff Council. The Executive Committee is open to better addressing these areas of concern and would appreciate support from campus leadership for more visibility.
- **I would like the Staff Council Chair position to be supported with a paid partial assignment (e.g. overload, stipend) to ensure its sustainability.** Having served as the interim and then elected Chair of Staff Council for two years, it is not an understatement to say that serving in the chair position requires extensive work and dedication. There are meetings to coordinate, multiple discussions happening within and outside of the Staff Council, information that needs to be disseminated either with the Executive Committee or with the greater Staff Council members. The chair has been called upon to present proposals to the President's Cabinet, speak at a press conference, prepare reports about the Staff Council, provide guidance to standing committee chairs, and speak to university leadership about staff initiatives/concerns and university policy changes. It has been sustained so far with a dedicated team of staff and the support of their direct supervisors who allow their employees to devote time during their regular work schedule to the Staff Council activities. However, the Staff Council will struggle to endure if there is no incentive for taking on these monumental duties year after year and if their managers are not supportive of the time commitment required.

Prepared by:

Janet Sundrud
Chair
SJSU Staff Council

Reviewed by:

Jessica Larsen
Vice Chair
SJSU Staff Council

Carrie Medders
Sr. Dir., Tech. & Training
University Personnel

Joanne Wright
Senior AVP
University Personnel