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mission statement

NUSAC is a group of volunteer staff members appointed by the President to represent employee concerns to the University administration. NUSAC solicits input, investigates concerns, and addresses issues with the University administration. The Council formulates recommendations and advises in decision-making processes regarding matters of concern for staff. NUSAC is dedicated to maintaining a positive work environment for staff and promoting excellence within the University community.

Northwestern Honors Outstanding Employees

Paula Blaskovits and Sachin Patel have been selected as the Northwestern University 2008 Employees of the Year. They were honored recently at the 31st annual staff service recognition luncheon.

Blaskovits, business administrator in the Department of History at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, was named Evanston Employee of the Year. Patel, facilities coordinator in the School of Continuing Studies, was named Chicago Employee of the Year.

Other Chicago Employee of the Year finalists were Ann Ross, Feinberg School of Medicine, and A. Sage Smith, School of Law. Other Evanston finalists were Marsha Coffey, Department of Physics and Astronomy, and Kenneth Viani, Office for Research.

Northwestern also recognized the longtime service of 123 employees who have worked for the University for 45, 40, 35, 30, 25 and 20 years. They are:

45 years: Milton Gerald, Gerald Jerr
40 years: Elvis Acuna, Mary Bridges, Donald Easte, Gaye Markov, Albert Steiner, Joanne Tholl
35 years: Jerry Harris, Vennie Lyons, Brigitte Mann, Jerre Michelin, Carol Tuner, Cheryl Westbrook, Edmund Wilson, Karl Wolff
30 years: Richard Berk, Ronald Braeutigam, Betty Brugger, Daniel Bulfin, Robert Conway, Sheila Dworak, Barbara Fabian, Bruce Foster, Donald Hlinsky, Todd Leasia, Steven Lubet, Lawrence Maday, Danielle Pickard, Christopher Piehl, Kay Price, Melanie Rubin, Brenda Simms, Ellen Soo Hoo, Ingrid Stafford, Evangeline Walker, Samuel Jzong Yee Wu, Ida Zreiqat

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Northwestern Honors Outstanding Employees (cont.)

25 years: Vivian Alberici, Carolyn Betts, Peggy Bryant, John Burgoon, Andre Coleman, Gary Dascanio, Pamela David, Darren Davis Sr., Wilma Hill, Erica Kantor, David Kite, Maria-Socorro Madayag, Joann Mete, Gail Muir, Daniel Murphy, Charles O’Connor, Vadal Redmond, Gail Rosenblum, Barbara Seegert, Mary Ann Theis, Hoan Nguyen Tran, Robert Trautvetter, Pauline Velasco, Susan Whiting, Judith Wray


Northwestern’s “Unsung Staff” Highlight

NUSAC would like to acknowledge the contributions of unsung staff at Northwestern. With that in mind, we will be interviewing individual staff for the newsletter to introduce you to some of your fellow dedicated employees at the University that you might not have had the pleasure to work with.

Curtis Robinson is a senior office service worker in the mailroom at Kellogg School of Management; he has worked for Kellogg for 4 years. His colleagues note that Curtis is always helpful and smiling whenever you see him.

What is one of the most challenging situations you have faced at Northwestern?
My most challenging situation was when I was promoted to supervisor of the mailroom; having to deal with a large facility like Kellogg and managing a staff.

When you are not at the University, what do you do for fun and relaxation?
I love going to the lakefront, going out to eat and to the movies.

What do you think would benefit staff either in your school or University-wide?
To be able to take advantage of the tuition program at Northwestern.

Where do you like to go with your co-workers to lunch?
Fish Keg and DD Dawgs.

Why do you think Northwestern is a good place to work?
There are a lot of opportunities here at Kellogg, we are appreciated by our dean each year for the hard work that we do; it’s a wonderful feeling just knowing that others really appreciate you.

How have you taken advantage of the other benefits/ events/ organizations here?
I wanted to take a real-estate class here at Northwestern; when I started looking into taking the class here I got inspired and ended up taking a course at Caldwell Real Estate.

Has there been anyone here that you feel has been especially beneficial to you as a mentor, an inspiration, or a colleague? How?
Carol Cahill, she amazes me. I figure if she can manage this whole building then I can manage my little mailroom.

Do you have a motto/ words of inspiration for the Northwestern community?
If you want to succeed, work hard and you can do it. Don’t stop working hard.
NUSAC Committee Update

NUSAC is comprised of three subcommittees (Human Resources, Benefits and Communication). Each of these committees strives to make improvements for all staff at the University on a continuous basis. Some of their accomplishments include:

- Encouraging expansion of HR office hours on the Chicago campus
- Requesting earlier announcement of benefit plan premiums to give staff more time to make decisions regarding healthcare
- Asking for open enrollment to be held later in the fall to better coordinate with other employer open enrollment periods
- Requesting an increase from 35% to 37% in Portable and Reduced Tuition benefits for eligible children
- Distributing NUSAC newsletter via email and paper
- Developing a new monthly informational e-mail, “NUSAC in Action,” that allows staff to send University-related questions to our email address (nusac@northwestern.edu); once a month we choose one of the questions and send the answer through bulk e-mail.

Please stay tuned for even better improvements in the very near future.

Summer 2008 Brown Bag Recap

On June 18 in Evanston and June 19 in Chicago, Pam Beemer, associate vice president for human resources, spoke to faculty and staff at NUSAC’s summer brown bag. There were 28 people in Evanston and 12 in Chicago – representing a wide range of length of employment at Northwestern from 6 weeks through 35 years – who came to listen to Pam describe her background in HR and her vision for HR in the future.

Elizabeth Gladic, head of NUSAC’s HR subcommittee, and Anita Chase, NUSAC communications committee member, introduced Pam and announced that this brown bag was being held in honor of Claudia Kunin, the late managing director of the Theater and Interpretation Center and former NUSAC chair.

Pam began by asking the crowd to introduce themselves. Then she described her HR background, beginning as an administrative assistant to the AVP for human resources at Michigan State while working her way through college, followed by stints at Oakland University, Stroh’s Brewery, and Sparrow Hospital and Health System before ending up back at Michigan State – serving as AVP for human resources prior to joining Northwestern last fall.

Pam described her view that Northwestern should be the premier employer of choice in our community, hiring a diverse workforce of highly skilled, energetic, and engaged faculty and staff. Her goals include creating a culture that values civility and responsible citizenship, and promotes a positive employment relationship at all levels within Northwestern. She also expressed an understanding of the need to provide competitive compensation and benefit programs that help attract and retain top talent. Pam challenged the audience to make every encounter with others in the workplace a special experience, no matter what position we’re in, and said that we all influence the success of Northwestern.

She then opened up the floor for questions. Topics brought up by attendees included: concerns about how much or how little the University appears to value, appreciate, and respect staff; issues of compensation (such as transparency and fairness); staff turnover; a desire to have clearer career paths; tuition reimbursement (which was asked about by many in attendance); ways to save money with recent high gas prices; the benefits process; and concern that the recent Medical School/ENH partnership ending would impact health care providers. Pam listened, answered many of the questions and took notes. She informed attendees that an HR safety and security team was formed to help address security and hours of operation of HR on both the Evanston and Chicago campus locations.

The brown bag was a helpful session for all who attended. Many of the concerns seemed to be the same on both campuses, and Pam assured attendees that their issues were being heard and are being addressed. NUSAC would like to thank Pam and everyone that took the time out of their busy schedules to attend. Have an idea for a future brown bag? E-mail NUSAC at nusac@northwestern.edu.

Gas prices too high, but still need to get to work? Consider carpooling! Northwestern is considering its own ride share program, but there is a current resource out there – check out Pace’s RIDESHARE program: http://www.pacerideshare.com/en-US/
Have you seen NUSAC’s new monthly e-mail, NUSAC in Action? NUSAC fields questions from employees on both campuses, pointing out underutilized benefits and clarifying University policies. Missed the e-mails? Here’s a summary of recent e-mails:

**Surplus Property Exchange**

NUSAC in Action addressed an employee’s inquiry about finding affordable filing cabinets by directing him to University Services Surplus Property Exchange: [www.northwestern.edu/services/office](http://www.northwestern.edu/services/office)

The Surplus Property Exchange is an online “bulletin board” where departments and schools can list items they no longer want for sale or free and search for items they need. Through the Surplus Property Exchange, you can find furniture, lab equipment, toner, computers, automobiles, and more. Schools and departments can also post a “wanted” ad for items they need.

Once items are posted for 30 days, Northwestern employees may bid on them for personal use. However, some equipment, especially lab equipment, may only be open to bids from schools or departments. No personal items may be listed and transactions are only open to schools, departments, faculty and staff. All transaction details are up to the buyer and seller; University Services just provides a forum for the exchange.

**WildCARD Discounts**

NUSAC highlights a great resource available through University Services -- the WildCard Advantage Discounts: [http://www.univsvcs.northwestern.edu/WildCARDAdv](http://www.univsvcs.northwestern.edu/WildCARDAdv)

The WildCard Advantage Discounts is an online list of local merchants in Evanston and Chicago that offer discounts on delivery, items/products and services. All you need to do is present your WildCard at the time of purchase to receive the discount. And if a merchant is not listed, be sure to ask during your purchase if they offer an NU WildCard discount. You’ll be surprised to see who offers discounts to the Northwestern community.

**Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)**

A Flexible Spending Account (FSA) is a great benefit that could save you some money. You contribute to your individual FSA health care account through payroll deduction before taxes are taken out. This money is then available throughout the calendar year to pay for eligible health, dental and vision expenses like doctor’s office visit and prescription drug co-pays, and out-of-pocket medical expenses – things that are not covered by insurance. This can save you 15-30% on income taxes, depending on your tax bracket. These tax-related savings may increase your net take home pay.

You pay for eligible health care expenses by either using a PayFlex debit card, or by filing a PayFlex FSA claim form online. Use your PayFlex card like a credit card when paying for the service or item and eligible charges will be taken directly from your FSA health care account. You can check your account balance and view contribution and expense transactions online at [www.mypayflex.com](http://www.mypayflex.com).

For more information on which expenses are IRS covered, consult the list: [https://www.payflex.com/mypayflex/eligibleExpenseItems.htm](https://www.payflex.com/mypayflex/eligibleExpenseItems.htm)

For more information on FSAs (including how to open an FSA account) and other employee benefits and questions, please visit the Benefits Division website at [http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/).

Read all of the NUSAC in Action e-mails at [www.northwestern.edu/nusac/whatsnew.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/nusac/whatsnew.html)