Spring 2012 Newsletter

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Message from the Chair

Colleagues:

It amazes me how our campuses transform as we move through the seasons. As we celebrate the arrival of spring, I hope each of you have the opportunity to enjoy the wonders of our campuses. It is also a great time to think about how we can all contribute to ensuring the beauty of the campuses and our world.

NUSAC has been busy helping staff to address the ways in which we can contribute to our campuses’ sustainability efforts. In March, we hosted a brown bag on each campus that featured Robert Whittier, Northwestern University’s Director of Sustainability. We have also been involved and consulted in the design of new green space on the Evanston campus. Being more sustainable also means that we each can make small changes that have a big impact. I encourage you to examine the many opportunities we have at the University from our transit benefits to opportunities to lead and be involved in recycling and other green efforts in your department. One of the ways to become more sustainable is to participate in Bike to Work Day in June. NUSAC will be assisting with bike stations. More details about the event and stations will be emailed in the coming weeks.

Sustainability hasn’t been our only focus during the past few months. We have also been involved in supporting the Employee of the Year process, continuing to work to review the University’s tuition benefits, as well preparing for the annual state of the University addresses presented in Conversations with the President.

Other developments during the past months include a newly updated and reorganized Web site for the Office of Human Resources and the continued dedication and support for NU Cares (the employee-to-employee assistance fund) from colleagues around the University. You can look forward to upcoming brown bag sessions that will provide an opportunity for exploration of the new HR Web site. NUSAC will also co-host two brown bag sessions with the Office of Work/Life Resources to provide information regarding Eldercare (May 23rd in Chicago from 3:30-5 p.m. & May 24th in Evanston from 12-1:30 p.m.). See the "upcoming events" section below for details.

As NUSAC Chair, I have also participated as a member of the planning team that is preparing for the NATO Summit that will take place in Chicago on May 18-21, 2012. I have worked to ensure that the group is aware of how preparations for this event itself may impact staff at the University.
I am excited about the work we continue to do on behalf of our staff colleagues and hope that you are as well. I encourage you to utilize this spring as an opportunity to consider what you can do to make the campus more sustainable. I also invite you to consider joining NUSAC as a council member and help us continue to contribute to the improvement of our university community.

Dr. Timothy W. Gordon
NUSAC Chair
Associate Dean for Student and Alumni Services
School of Continuing Studies

NUSAC Member Recruitment

The Northwestern University Staff Advisory Council (NUSAC) is recruiting new council members. Please consider joining fellow staff members and become active within the University community.

Why Apply?
- Join a diverse staff volunteer group focused on promoting a positive work environment.
- Help communicate staff concerns and feedback to the attention of the University administrators.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about the University’s current issues and strategic plan.
- Increase your networking connections throughout the University.

About NUSAC:
NUSAC is a group of 25 volunteer staff members appointed by President Morton Schapiro to promote a positive work environment and serve as an advocacy group and communication channel between staff and University administration.

Membership Eligibility:
- Applicants must be a regular full- or part-time staff member with at least two years of continuous service at the University.
- Supervisor approval. Applicants and members must have an agreement with their supervisors that some of their work time will be spent attending NUSAC meetings, participating in NUSAC-related events, and working on projects on behalf of NUSAC.

Membership Responsibilities:
- Be available to attend monthly General Council meetings (alternating between the Chicago and Evanston campuses).
- Be available to attend additional monthly meetings for one of four working subcommittees (Benefits, Human Resources, Outreach, and Communications).
- Be willing to work as part of a team.
- Commit to serving a three-year membership term.

If interested, please submit a completed application by May 31, 2012. Interviews will take place in late June.

The application and additional information are available online: www.northwestern.edu/nusac/aboutnusac/join.html

Please send questions/inquiries to nusac@northwestern.edu. Applications due by May 31, 2012.

An Interview with a NUSAC Member: My Experience on the Council

Interested in applying to join NUSAC? Read an interview with a long-standing Council member.

Bianca Ramirez (Assistant Director, International & Area Studies, Weinberg College) shares her reasons for serving on NUSAC and her perspective on the impact of the Council on the University community. Ramirez has been a member since 2009.

What about NUSAC drew your interest and made you apply?
I initially applied because I was really excited to be directly involved in creating a fulfilling and engaging staff environment at Northwestern and I wanted my voice to be heard.

What do you like most about participating in NUSAC?
I enjoy getting to know people from all over campus. It’s always amazing to hear about the great things the University staff is helping to accomplish both at home and globally.

What has surprised you most/what were you surprised to learn?
Learning about the different work environments for staff on campus has been really interesting. For me, because I work in Weinberg, the undergraduate student body is always at the forefront of what I do and what my office plans for but there are other areas of the University that have very little interaction with the undergraduate student body and have very different priorities and work cycles. It’s interesting to learn about all the different parts of the University and to see how they all fit in to the larger picture.

**Why do feel that NUSAC is a valuable group for the “good of the order,” and how have you most benefitted from membership yourself?**

I think because of the work that we’ve been involved with (the brown bag sessions, community outreach events, the NU Cares fund, etc.) the NU staff feels like they can look to NUSAC for help and support with staff issues. Being able to collect this valuable input from staff helps to shape the goals and priorities we present to the administration on behalf of staff.

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**NU Cares Update: Helping Colleagues in Need**

For faculty and staff, Northwestern University isn’t just a workplace, it’s a community. And in times of crisis, a community offers support. *NU Cares* is an employee-to-employee assistance fund designed to help our colleagues in times of extreme financial hardship.

**Donating to the Fund:** Employees may donate to the *NU Cares* fund by cash, check, or payroll deduction. All contributions are used to assist fellow employees. Imagine if each of the 8,000 faculty and staff at Northwestern were to donate $1 per paycheck; the result would be a thriving fund able to assist employees in times of crisis.

**Applying for Assistance:** All health benefits-eligible employees in good standing are eligible to apply (regardless of whether or not they donated to the fund). Applications are strictly confidential and are reviewed by a committee of staff and faculty. The fund is administered by the Office of Work/Life Resources within the Office of Human Resources. Assistance granted is not a loan and is not required to be repaid.

Visit the [NU Cares Web site](http://example.com) for additional information.

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**Upcoming Events**

**Brown Bag Sessions: Family Caregiving**

*Co-sponsored by NUSAC and the Office of Work/Life Resources*

Navigating the complex world of senior care can be a challenge, but [www.Care.com](http://www.care.com) is here to help. Northwestern University faculty and staff now have access to NU Senior Care Connections. Through this program you can connect with experienced Senior Care Advisors who will provide personal support and guidance, provider options matched to your needs, and peace of mind as you care for your loved ones. Join us for launch sessions to learn more about the Care.com benefit and to meet with a Senior Care Advisor!

**How to Put the "Share" in Family Caregiving**

Chicago: May 23, 2012, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

*Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center, Baldwin Auditorium*

Given the significant financial, emotional, and physical demands of caregiving, complicated family dynamics can be one of the most challenging aspects of caring for an aging family member. Conflicts can arise over many issues: disagreements over an elder's condition and capabilities; financial and legal matters; plus caregiving roles and responsibilities. Sibling rivalries dating back to childhood are often exacerbated under the strain of caregiving. In addition, the burden of care often falls to one family member, and unequal responsibilities can lead to increased frustration and discord.

This seminar will look at the challenges families frequently face when caring for an elder. We will explore strategies that enable siblings and other family members to minimize conflicts and approach caregiving in a more mutually collaborative and supportive manner. R.S.V.P. to [Phyllis Ellis](mailto:phyllis.ellis@northwestern.edu) or 847-467-1460.

**A Proactive Approach to Caregiving: Preparing for the Unexpected**

Evanston: May 24, 2012, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.

*Norris University Center, Rock Room*

Many people find themselves unprepared when faced with the complex issues associated with providing care for an aging loved one. The process of caregiving often requires ongoing assessment, flexibility, and knowledge of the health care delivery system. Caregivers may suddenly find themselves trying to sort out the different options for care, without a clear
understanding of quality and cost. Planning can assist families to prepare more effectively for the care of an aging family member, mitigate an unexpected crisis, and ultimately result in better choices and outcomes.

The session will address the following questions: How can adult children effectively and proactively manage caregiving responsibilities? What are the challenges faced by caregivers and the resources available to meet those challenges? How can adult children mitigate the stress of caregiving and enlist family and community supports? R.S.V.P. to Phyllis Ellis or 847-467-1460.

Be sure to periodically visit NUSAC’s Calendar of Events to keep informed of upcoming staff events.

Unsung Staff Highlight

Northwestern University abounds with exceptional staff members who go above and beyond to make this a great place to work and learn–whom we call our “unsung staff.” In this edition of the newsletter, we introduce you to Catherine (Cat) Owney, the Assistant Director of University Residential Life (URL) and co-advisor of the Residence Hall Association at the Evanston campus.

Cat is responsible for community development, programming, and leadership education for URL. She started working at NU in January 2011. She has previously worked at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas State University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Cat earned her Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Master of Public Administration from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She completed her PhD in Higher Education Administration at the University of Texas at Austin in December 2010.

Where did you grow up?
I grew up in Elmhurst, IL.

When did you start working at Northwestern, and how did you get your current job?
I started working at Northwestern in January 2011. I had been living in Austin and working at the University of Texas (UT) at Austin for a little over five years and wanted to get back closer to family. My position at UT was similar to the position I have here at Northwestern, so it was a great fit.

What do you like best about your position and why? What is a typical day like?
The best part of my position is the outstanding students and staff I interact with on a daily basis. There is no typical day in Residential Life, which is another great part of my position. I usually have a schedule and to-do list for my day, but it rarely goes as planned. We work with students where they live, which means we support them through everything, positive and negative, they are experiencing. The nature of what we do leads to the unexpected, so there is never a boring or routine day.

Has anyone here been especially helpful to you as a mentor or collaborator?
Since the day I started at NU, every staff person I have interaction with has been welcoming and provided helpful insight and resources. NU staff come from a variety of backgrounds and each person offers a unique perspective based on their experience at NU and elsewhere. Everything they have shared with me has helped me develop a deeper understanding of the NU culture, which has helped me personally and professionally.

What advice do you have for staff university-wide about being successful or getting the most out of NU?
I have found NU to be a place that has tradition, but also dynamic and open to change. Therefore, I recommend that staff take initiative and bring new ideas to implement. In the areas where this is possible, this will lead to positive change for the institution, as well as allow staff to have new experiences and challenges. I believe embracing current and fresh ideas in your field is the best way to stay motivated and fulfilled in your position.

When you are not at Northwestern, what do you do for fun outside of work?
My daughter, Nia, was born in September 2011. My world outside of work revolves around her, my husband, and our extended family. It is so fun to see her personality develop as she learns new skills. We have two nephews that are just 14 months older than Nia, so we love to spend time with all of them together. Our favorite hangout is my brother’s restaurant, BrownTrout, where we always have a great meal and camaraderie.

Is there something interesting about yourself, which most people might not expect?
One thing that usually surprises people is that I did a year-long internship as a Juvenile Probation Officer at the Cook County Juvenile Courts while in college at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

What are some of your favorite things or "gems" at NU (resources/special events/great opportunities)? Why are they your favorite?
It is no secret, but the location of both the Chicago and Evanston NU campuses are amazing. Being able to take a walk at lunch and see both natural and man-made beauty is a great opportunity that I know I sometimes take for granted, but need to enjoy more often. Both campuses have so many free or low cost events that are entertaining and informative, there is constant opportunity to learn and be inspired.

What would you like to see as changes or goals in the future for your department and for Northwestern as an institution?

The Division of Student Affairs and my department were recently reorganized. I am looking forward to working with the new leadership to create a new strategic plan and contributing to meeting the goals of that plan. I am excited about the changes that have already happened and look forward to being a part of additional positive developments.

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**Announcements**

**Brown Bags on Sustainability held on March 19 & 23**

NUSAC held two brown bags in March on sustainability (March 19 in Evanston and March 23 in Chicago). On the Chicago campus, Robert Whittier, Northwestern University’s Director of Sustainability, spoke to an interested crowd of 25 about how one can define sustainability and why it matters. As a large consumer of energy, he said, Northwestern can make a big difference even by making small changes. While students have been driving sustainability initiatives so far, Whittier described some initiatives that directly involve staff. One is the Green Office Initiative, a program that is currently being piloted to target energy and sustainability in offices, classrooms, labs and common space. Sustainability working groups are another way to participate; one on biking is currently in the works. To learn more about what you can do, go to: [www.northwestern.edu/fm/sustainability/environmental-education/](http://www.northwestern.edu/fm/sustainability/environmental-education/) or contact Robert Whittier at [Robert.whittier@northwestern.edu](mailto:Robert.whittier@northwestern.edu) for more information on working groups or the Green Office Initiative. Whether it’s by recycling, ordering more environmentally-friendly office supplies, turning off lights and computers at the end of the day or carpooling, all staff can make efforts to reduce Northwestern’s "carbon footprint."

**Conversations with the President held on April 10 & 12**

Breaking the weather trend of the last few years, April 10 and 12 dawned precipitation-free on the Chicago and Evanston campuses, and crowds of staff and faculty turned out in both venues to attend this year’s Conversation with the President. Approximately 200 people attended in Chicago and nearly 135 people were present in Evanston. Additionally, over 130 people viewed each of five webcasts. Senior administrators, including Daniel Linzer (Provost), Eugene Sunshine (Senior V.P. for Business and Finance), Pamela Beemer (A.V.P. of Human Resources), Robert McQuinn (V.P. for Alumni Relations and Development), and Bruce Lewis (A.V.P. of Public Safety) along with several Deans, joined President Morton Schapiro in responding to staff and faculty questions.

Timothy Gordon, NUSAC’s chair, welcomed attendees before introducing the President. President Schapiro began by expressing his gratefulness for these events and the opportunity to exchange ideas and gather honest feedback. He encouraged faculty, staff and students to participate in other opportunities as well, including firesides, coffees and lunches. His opening remarks addressed changes that have had or will have an impact on the University, including the hiring of six new deans during his tenure, managing space on the campus, the upcoming capital campaign and the current financial situation. While the short term might be more difficult than expected, President Schapiro said that he was optimistic about the University’s finances over the next few years. In his assessment, Northwestern has been responsible with its finances and has a strong, specific strategic plan, and as the economy turns around, is making good progress. President Schapiro also addressed what he sees as continuing challenges and critical issues, specifically diversity and inclusion initiatives to strengthen community.

During the question and answer portion of the event, Chicago campus questions addressed the new diversity initiative, security on campus relating to the NATO summit, Northwestern’s role in an amicus brief for Fisher v. Texas, and plans for the old Prentice building and for other spaces on the campus. Questions from the Evanston campus also included diversity, as well as parking, sustainability, the role of athletics, leadership training for managers, religious life on campus, funding for research, and emergency preparedness.

Both Conversations are viewable on the Northwestern News Page.
NUSAC’s Spring Food & Toiletry Drive: Giving Back to Those in Need

NUSAC sponsored a Spring drive for families in need. Faculty and staff were asked to participate by donating non-perishable food supplies and general toiletry items. Collected foods and toiletries helped support Connections for the Homeless in Evanston and the Marillac House food pantry in Chicago.

Connections for the Homeless serves more than 1,000 people who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes in 31 communities throughout Northern Cook County, including Evanston. Marillac House serves the needs of the poor and working poor of the West Side of Chicago by providing programs and services for children, families, seniors and youth. Read a thank you note from Marillac House’s Director of Family Services. Thank you for your contributions!

Ready for Summer Fun?! Take Advantage of the WildCARD Discount to Six Flags Great America

In spring, a man’s fancy turns to... when does Six Flags Great America open for the season?? It’s never too early to think about planning for the summer, and we wanted to remind you that your Northwestern University WildCARD provides a discount to Six Flags Great America in Gurnee. This discount is good for any day in the season and you can buy tickets for your entire group (up to 20). Get ready: this year the park opens May 5, 2012 and the season runs through August 27, 2012 (and weekends in September and October). View details about this discount...and, while you’re on the WildCARD site, check out some of the other great deals you can use if you have a Northwestern WildCARD!

Chicago Campus Book Club: Calling all Enthusiastic Readers!

Do you like to read? Want to exercise your brain? Interested in meeting other colleagues based on the Chicago campus? If so, then a Chicago Campus lunchtime book club may be for you! What is a lunchtime book club? It’s simple: a small group of people choose a book and spend their lunchtime together discussing it. Groups formed this month and will be meeting on specific days of the week. There might be one that fits your schedule. Contact Lynn Steiner with inquiries (lynn-steiner@northwestern.edu or 312-503-4745). All enthusiastic readers are welcome!

Service Excellence Awards: Brighten your Colleague’s Day with a Nomination

Have you worked with someone who helped you out, made your job a little easier, or brightened your day? A smile and thanks go a long way, why not do more, and nominate this person for a Service Excellence Award? The nomination form is short, and the awardee will receive a small gift and lunch with President Schapiro! View additional information and download the nomination form here.

Quarterly Service Excellence Luncheons honor nominated staff members who go above and beyond the call of duty to complete a task or meet a goal. The last luncheon, held on April 5, 2012 honored 42 staff members (view listing).

NUSAC Members

2011-2012 NUSAC Executive Committee
Dr. Timothy W. Gordon, NUSAC Chair
Dauphine Gregory, NUSAC Vice Chair
Joe Ellison, NUSAC Co-Secretary
Rosie Miles-Jamison, NUSAC Co-Secretary
George Nejmeh, NUSAC Treasurer

Contact NUSAC:
- 2011-2012 Council Member Roster.
- Web site: www.northwestern.edu/nusac
- Email: nusac@northwestern.edu or submit a suggestion/inquiry online.

NUSAC - Celebrating over 35 years of staff advocacy and pursuing excellence!

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