Message from the Chair

Colleagues:

It is hard to believe that we are now into the official winter season and quarter. I hope that each of you was able to take some time over the winter break to recharge and refuel as we begin our work supporting students, faculty and the university. In my time as Chair, I have had occasion to hear what a great contribution and resource we (staff) are to the University. NUSAC’s goal is to continue to work with each of you and the University to ensure that you have an environment and tools that continue to allow you to be engaged and excited about your work.

NUSAC has been involved in advising President Schapiro and the administration during the past year and quarter to continue to improve the environment for all staff employees. Some notable changes and accomplishments include:

- A new portable tuition that provides staff the opportunity to identify non-NU organizations to provide specialized training and continued professional development through coursework.
- Successful launch of the NU Cares fund which has allowed for several grant awards to be made to staff members experiencing financial hardship.
- Continuation of “Coffees with the President” in order to allow President Schapiro to interact with small and randomly selected groups of staff.
- Meeting with the President to continue to identify the specific role of staff in the operationalization of the University’s newly adopted strategic plan.
- Responding to individual staff concerns expressed in various venues to ensure that they are addressed.

I am excited about the work that NUSAC has done and continues to do and invite you to engage with us. You can consider attending a brownbag workshop, the “Conversations with the President,” nominating yourself or a colleague for a council position for the 2012-2015 term, or e-mail your thoughts and concerns to nusac@northwestern.edu.

Best wishes for a great 2012 and I look forward to continuing to help support the great work of my staff colleagues.

Dr. Timothy W. Gordon

NUSAC Chair
NU Cares Update

At the recent Health & Benefits Fairs, 74% of participants said they knew about, or had heard of, NU Cares. If you’re in the 26% who has not heard of NU Cares and what it’s about, NU Cares is a fund for employees, funded by employee contributions, to help your colleagues in cases of extreme financial need. The fund grows by receiving one-time donations or recurring donations (through payroll deductions). As of November 1, 2011, the fund has received 128 recurring donations (and many one-time donations) and had a balance of about $4,100. In its first two months of operation, six people have been helped by the financial support the grants provide. In addition to the financial support, applicants are pointed to the many crisis and counseling resources that partner with Northwestern.

It is clear that assistance is needed in the University community. NUSAC, and the Office of Work/Life Resources in Human Resources, will continue to oversee the maintenance and growth of the NU Cares along with its administration. A committee made up of faculty and staff is responsible for awarding the grants, and provides valuable suggestions and feedback to the administrators about the fund. Help us grow NU Cares so that we can help as many staff and faculty members who need it! For more information about the fund, including how to apply for a grant or how to contribute, visit: www.northwestern.edu/nusac/nucares.

Upcoming Events

January 31
One Book One Northwestern to be discussed at Upcoming NUSAC Brown Bag

The One Book One Northwestern series continues with an upcoming Brown Bag hosted by NUSAC. This year’s book is “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” by Rebecca Skloot, which involves the remarkable story of how one African-American woman contributed, without her knowledge and consent, to some of the greatest biomedical advances in the past half-century.

The Brown Bag discussion will be led by Sunny Gibson, the Director of the Office of Diversity in the Feinberg School of Medicine.
Noon, January 31
Wiebolt Hall, Room 517
339 E. Chicago Avenue, Chicago

“The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” revolves around Henrietta Lacks, who was a poor African-American tobacco farmer and mother of five children. In 1951, Henrietta’s cells were taken for research, without her consent, when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer. These cells were the first to stay alive and reproduce outside of the human body for longer than a few weeks, and provide a practical means of studying a wide range of biomedical problems. These cells (referred to as “HeLa” cells) have contributed to many scientific discoveries and advances, including the polio vaccine, cloning, chemotherapy and in vitro fertilization. Virtually every single living person has in some way benefitted from the research conducted with these HeLa cells.

This book clearly describes the science of HeLa cells in layman’s terms, but also provides a portrait of Henrietta Lacks and her surviving family members. Henrietta passed away in 1951 from cervical cancer. Because she and her extended family have struggled to gain access to proper health insurance and medicine, it is truly ironic that Henrietta’s cells have helped so many, and yet her family has struggled financially and medically. However, Rebecca Skloot’s book has helped to raise awareness of Henrietta’s contribution. The book has received numerous awards, including being named the best book of 2010 by the New York Times, The Washington Post and Publisher’s Weekly, and the story is being made into an HBO movie produced by Oprah Winfrey and Alan Ball.

The book raises many fascinating questions about the history of medicine, medical ethics, socioeconomic disparities in medical care, journalism, and the science of reproducing cell lines. Many of these topics will be presented and discussed at this NUSAC Brown Bag Discussion.

Get involved in the campus-wide conversation and participate in activities by visiting the main web site for upcoming events.
Many programs and departments are holding their own discussions and events. You can also check out a copy of the book from one of the University libraries, or purchase a copy from the bookstores.

**March 19 & 23**

**Energy Saver Challenge & Brown Bag on Sustainability**

NUSAC is proud to help promote an energy saving initiative being offered to University employees on both the Chicago and Evanston campuses. Northwestern, in partnership with the City of Evanston and the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) has joined the CUB Energy Saver's Challenge to encourage reduced energy use across the region. This is a great opportunity to show that Northwestern employees are great partners and leaders in energy conservation!

Individuals who are ComEd customers can register for the Energy Saver program at [www.cubenergysaver.com/teams/northwestern](http://www.cubenergysaver.com/teams/northwestern). This program guides you to reduced home energy bills, allows you to track progress and even offers rewards for energy-saving actions.

*Any ComEd customer can join the Energy Saver Challenge:*

1. Visit [www.cubenergysaver.com/teams/northwestern](http://www.cubenergysaver.com/teams/northwestern);
2. Click "Join CUB Energy Saver";
3. Follow the directions to create your free CUB Energy Saver account;
4. Select among hundreds of actions to lower your utility bills;
5. Tell your friends & coworkers – you don’t have to be an NU employee to participate!

By signing up you will get a personalized energy-savings plan that recommends specific actions and calculates exactly how much money and energy you can save. Most of the actions are simple and low-cost and the materials are available at any hardware store and even at Best Buy. And if the NU team recruits the most members by the end of January 2012, all participants will be entered into a drawing to win an amazing gift - a year of free power worth up to $1800!

If you have any questions, contact Rob Whittier, Director of Sustainability, at [robert.whittier@northwestern.edu](mailto:robert.whittier@northwestern.edu).

NUSAC will also host a **Brown Bag on Sustainability** on each campus in March featuring Rob Whittier, Director of Sustainability, sharing ways that we can make a positive environmental impact in our daily work environments at Northwestern. The Evanston Brown Bag will take place on Monday, March 19 (location: Swift Hall 107) and the Chicago Brown Bag will be held on Friday, March 23 (location: Wieboldt 408).

**April 10 & 12**

**Conversations with the President**

Save the date for the upcoming Conversations with the President. All staff are invited to take part in conversations on the state of the University. Continuing a practice introduced in the first year of his tenure, President Schapiro invites all University staff, faculty and students to participate.

The 2012 Conversations with the President will be held on the following dates:

- **April 10, 2012**: 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Chicago campus, Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center, Hughes Auditorium, 303 E. Superior Street
- **April 12, 2012**: 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Evanston campus, McCormick Tribune Center, Forum Room, 1870 Campus Drive

**Select Upcoming Human Resource Workshops**

At press time, dates and locations for these workshops were not yet set. For up-to-date information and registration (open February 1), visit the Learning & Organization Development Web site: [www.northwestern.edu/hr/training](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/training).

**Customer Service Techniques**

This workshop teaches techniques for creating and maintaining positive work relationships with students, faculty, and staff.

Key Points:

- Recognize and respond to unspoken customer expectations
- Develop processes that foster positive customer interactions
- Prepare form letters and customized documents that anticipate objections and prevent resentment
- Deal with irate clients in person and over the phone
- Improve questioning, listening, and nonverbal communication skills

Managing Up
A harmonious, productive workplace relationship with your manager is one of the most important factors in your job satisfaction and success. If you work well and communicate effectively with your boss, you’re more likely to remain at your organization and sustain your success there. This highly interactive workshop can help you learn how and why.

Key points:
- Get expert tips on the best ways to approach your manager
- Quickly determine and clarify your manager’s expectations
- Learn to “give your boss feedback” about things that are sensitive
- Bring your best to your workplace relationship with your supervisor (and get his/hers in return)

Project Management Essentials
This workshop will help both new and experienced project managers review ways to produce a realistic and manageable project timeline. Participants learn the concepts and processes which can be applied to setting project goals, identifying project deliverables, and effectively estimating and measuring progress.

Key Points:
- Identify the project management processes
- Create a Scope Document
- Schedule project activities
- Estimate and allocate resources
- Control project progress
- Conduct a post-project review

Unsung Staff Highlight
Northwestern abounds with exceptional staff members who go above and beyond to make this a great place to work and learn; we call them our “unsung staff.” In this edition of the newsletter, we introduce you to Gail Renfrow, Accounting Assistant, Facilities Management Finance & Administration (Chicago campus).

When did you start at Northwestern University and how has Northwestern changed in your tenure?
I started as a temporary staff member in Facilities Management's Customer Service area in March 2007 and joined the regular staff as an Accounting Assistant for the new warehouse system in November 2008. The biggest change I've seen is with NUFinancials and the improved accountability that procurement system has brought. It was a long road for that changeover, but looking back on the CUFS days...I wouldn't go back.

What do you like best about your position and why? What is a typical day like?
My job is never boring. There are some quiet moments of entering billing charges, but most of the time I am on the prowl for rare arch door hinges for one of our historical buildings or dimming ballasts for UV lights for one of our labs. I order it all: pipes, thermostats, outlets, nuts, bolts, fingerprint scanners—whatever anyone needs, I get it, and I get it fast. My favorite part of my job is being the calm in the storm. A pipe bursts and I call around to get the part that will fix the problem. It's a huge team effort, and I love watching everyone come together to get the job done. I used to be a stage manager, and I still revel in that “show must go on” attitude—the University must keep running.

Has anyone here been especially helpful to you as a mentor or collaborator? In what way?
Everyone I work with is tremendously supportive. All of the trades supervisors, like engineer Rob Hopkins, and plumber Thom Cokel, have been very helpful in teaching me about the parts I'm not used to dealing with. I also have great managers like Al Kalvaitis, George Badillo, and Liz Schaps who truly go out of their way to support me. Anyone who has had to call in a problem on the Chicago Campus has spoken to Kim Buchanan and knows what a treasure the University has in her. She's a
delight to work with and my day is so pleasant knowing that I have a co-worker who is as committed to getting the job done as I am.

*When you are not at the University, what do you do for fun or to take advantage of the opportunities in Chicago?*

It's wonderful working on the Magnificent Mile. I pick up my step a little bit as I walk by the John Hancock building and the Water Tower on my way to work. The landmarks are reminders that I work in one of the most influential cities in the world and at one of the most prestigious universities in the country.

I have a toddler, so the rare nights I get to experience Chicago are usually spent at the Goodman or Lincoln Square Theaters (Chicago has *great* deals on theater tickets), at one of my favorite eateries like Revolution Brewing or Lula's Café, or the movies. Coming from small-town Kentucky where we had only one cinema, getting to choose what movie you get to see—whether it's *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* at the Gene Siskel, *Melancholia* at Landmark, or *The Muppets* at my nearby Regal Cinema—is a treat.

*What are some of your favorite things or "gems" at NU (resources/special events/great opportunities)? Why are they your favorite?*

I feel so fortunate that the University provides so many training and development classes through the Office of Human Resources. I took the "Managing Your Career" class, and was surprised to find how empowered I felt. I thought I was getting a class on how to have a better job interview, but it was mostly about finding your strengths and bringing them to the fore in your present career. I also love the charitable opportunities the University provides. I am always looking for ways to help people, and I enjoy having Northwestern as a resource.

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

I am very excited about the plans to make Northwestern University more energy efficient. Facilities Management recently hired a new Director of Sustainability, Robert Whittier, and I am looking forward to improvements that will reduce the University's carbon footprint. We have already undergone a lot of changes, like retrofitting all T12 fixtures on the Evanston Campus to the more energy efficient T8 lamps, and Julie Cahilane with Recycling & Refuse has done a phenomenal job of engaging students in recycling clothes and furniture with her Move Out program. There are definitely ways we can, and must, improve. Consider the depletion of phosphorus, which will be exhausted within 75 years if measures are not taken. As the supply of resources like phosphorus dwindles (China currently has 97% of the earth's phosphors) the University will have to pay more. Becoming more energy efficient also means becoming more cost efficient, and I am looking forward to the environment we will help create for our students.

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**Staff Benefits: Updates**

**Changes to Vacation and Personal Floating Holidays**

In September, Human Resources announced a number of changes to the staff Vacation and Personal Floating Holiday (PFH) programs. These changes are intended to remove some of the barriers to using accrued vacation and PFH time, and allow for easier and more consistent management of these time off programs.

**Highlights of Changes:**

- **Vacation Time Usage** – Some of the restrictions in Vacation usage have been removed such that eligible staff employees will earn vacation time that may be used, subject to supervisory approval, at any time after the vacation time is earned.
- **Personal Floating Holidays** - Three Personal Floating Holidays (PFHs) will be given to all eligible active exempt and non-exempt employees on September 1st of each year instead of the current distribution of one PFH on the first of January, April, and July. Employees must use their PFHs by the end of the fiscal year instead of the calendar year.
- **New Accrual Plan for Exempt Staff in Salary Grades 14+ and ITS 85+.** Exempt staff employees in salary grades EXS14 and higher and ITS 85 and higher will earn vacation time at an annual rate of 4 weeks per year at the start of employment. At the 19 year anniversary, the annual accrual rate will increase to 5 weeks of vacation.

For full details, please view the PDF, provided by Human Resources: [www.northwestern.edu/hr/hris/leaveaccruals/StaffAccrualChangesEmail.pdf](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/hris/leaveaccruals/StaffAccrualChangesEmail.pdf)

**Tuition Benefits Enhancement: Employee Portable Tuition Plan**

Professional development just got easier and more affordable! In case you missed it, last October Human Resources announced a new education assistance option for Northwestern employees. Full-time employees can now be reimbursed for taking work-related courses at colleges and universities outside Northwestern. This benefit is available as part of the Employee Portable Tuition plan.
To qualify, individuals must be full-time employees with one year of service completed prior to the beginning of the term. The reimbursement is based on the tuition and general recurring fees up to $2,500 per calendar year. Additional information: www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/plans/tuition/index.html.

Announcements

NUSAC's Winter Coat Drive 2011
NUSAC sponsored a Fall 2011 Coat Drive for families in need from November 1 – 18. Over 1,000 new or gently used child, teen, and adult sized coats were collected on both campuses. Coats collected in Chicago were donated to Marillac House where they were sold at the organization’s annual coat sale. Overwhelmingly successful, the sale (with contributions from a few organizations) raised over $2,000 to help support senior program activities throughout the year. On the Evanston campus, 634 coats were collected and distributed to families in need at Family Focus.

Coffee with the President held on Nov. 2
NUSAC is very excited to offer six Coffee with the President events across both the Evanston and Chicago campuses in the 2011-2012 academic year. Last year’s Coffees received encouraging feedback from both President Schapiro and the participants, as the events provide an opportunity for staff to converse with the President in a small, informal setting. As in the past, participants are randomly chosen and invited from the campus hosting the event. This year, in response to requests from staff for an opportunity to network with fellow staff, additional time has been added at the start of the event.

November 2nd kicked off the first Coffee event for the year in Wieboldt Hall and a few of the issues raised by staff correlated to initiatives addressed in the recently unveiled Strategic Plan. Additionally, Feinberg staff raised concerns about space utilization and expressed an interest in better connecting with members of the Evanston community when it comes to technical infrastructure improvements that can be shared across campuses. President Schapiro candidly addressed these issues and stated he’d continue working on improvements as the Plan progresses into action. The second Coffee will be held in January in Evanston. NUSAC looks forward to many more engaging and successful Coffee with the President events. Please stay tuned to our newsletter as we provide updates on the issues brought forward throughout the course of the year.

Brown Bag on Handling Stressful Situations held on Nov. 16
On November 16, 2011, NUSAC and the Association of Northwestern University Women (ANUW) co-sponsored a brown bag lecture featuring Dr. Mark Reinecke, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the Feinberg School of Medicine. Dr. Reinecke provided guidance to a packed audience of NU staff about ways to move past stressful situations. He based his talk on his book “Little Ways to Keep Calm and Carry On: Twenty Lessons for Managing Worry, Anxiety and Fear.” Read more about Dr. Reinecke’s thoughts on reducing anxiety at www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/news/past-years/2010/2010A-December/Reinecke_Book.html.

Service Excellence Awards
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, by 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!

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 fall luncheon, held on November 21, 2011, honored 44 staff members. View the list of staff members honored.

View additional information and download the nomination form at www.northwestern.edu/hr/training/servrec.html#year.

Employee of the Year
It’s not too late to nominate a colleague who has gone “above and beyond” job requirements in 2011! Recognize someone for his or her initiative in managing a project, facilitating a program change successfully, stepping in during a crisis or another major achievement that occurred last year.

Each year a committee will review all submitted nominations and select seven finalists for Employee of the Year. From those seven finalists the committee will then select one Employee of the Year winner, to be announced at the annual Staff Service Recognition Luncheon on May 1, 2012. Nominations for Employee of the Year 2012 may be submitted any time before February 17, 2012.

View additional information and download the nomination form at www.northwestern.edu/hr/training/servrec.html#year.

Feinberg Staff Scholarships Awarded
The Feinberg School of Medicine Staff Relations Committee (SRC) awarded five Feinberg staff members scholarships from the new SRC scholarship fund on October 19. The scholarships help offset the costs of professional development activities.
The SRC received more than 40 applications for the scholarship. Recipients include:

- Adriane Easte, a financial specialist in the Department of Preventive Medicine, who will use the funds to help pay for the certification exam for research administrators.
- Christopher Warren, research project coordinator in the Institute for Healthcare Studies, who will use the funds to attend the 2011 meeting of the American Public Health Association.
- Matthew Temkin, business administrator for the Center for Genetic Medicine, who will use the funds to participate in the University's six-part leadership and management series.
- Phillip Cooper, research program coordinator in the Department of Urology, who will use the funds to help pay for pre-medical school classes.
- Michelle Morely, research coordinator in the Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, who will use the funds to offset the cost of her Master's degree in clinical research and regulatory administration.

The SRC will continue to provide scholarships on an annual basis to support the professional development of the Feinberg staff. If you are interested in contributing to the SRC scholarship fund, please send an e-mail to fsrc@northwestern.edu.

NUSAC Members

NUSAC would like to welcome the following new members:

**Lot Bercasio**  
Business Administrator  
Center for Comparative Medicine  
Evanston Campus

**Adam Boehler**  
Accounting Assistant  
Facilities Management  
Evanston Campus

**Ann Knauth**  
Web Administrator  
School of Communication Administration  
Evanston Campus

**Apryl Schlueter**  
Business Administrator  
Department of Mechanical Engineering  
McCormick School of Engineering  
Evanston Campus

**Tina Shontz**  
Executive Assistant to the Dean  
Dean's Office, Feinberg School of Medicine  
Chicago Campus

**Thongsy Singvongsa**  
Financial Administrator II  
Biostatistics Collaboration Center  
Department of Preventive Medicine  
Chicago Campus

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

[Full Member Roster](#)  
[Contact Information](#)