



**Northwestern University Staff Advisory Council
(NUSAC)**

Annual Report 2006-07

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Northwestern University Staff Advisory Council is a group of volunteer staff members appointed by the President to represent employee concerns to the University administration. NUSAC solicits input, investigates concerns, addresses issues with the University administration, 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.

Chartered by Northwestern University's president in 1973, NUSAC provides service to the University community by representing the opinions, concerns, and experiences of its nonexempt and exempt staff.

This service is facilitated through networking and educational outreach by way of its newsletter, brown bag seminars and sponsorship of the President's Annual State of the University Address. NUSAC also provides representation of staff concerns through meeting with the Department of Human Resources and University Administrators, as well as participation on University Committees and Task Forces

NUSAC is comprised of eighteen staff employees drawn from both Northwestern's Chicago and Evanston campuses. Each of the eighteen NUSAC members serves on one of three standing committees: Benefits, Communications, and Human Resources. These committees meet independently of the regularly scheduled monthly NUSAC General Council meetings and are the main conduit for communicating staff concerns related to benefits, compensation, and employment here at the University.

NUSAC General Council 2006-2007

NUSAC Officers 2006-2007

Jason Grocholski, Chair
Deborah Cundiff, Vice-Chair
Jessica Abrams, Secretary
Elizabeth Gladic, Treasurer

In 2006-2007, the Council was comprised of five members from the Chicago campus and 13 members from the Evanston campus. The various schools and departments represented in the Council's makeup included Accounting Services, Information Technology, Facilities Management, the Feinberg School of Medicine, Information Technology, the Kellogg School of Management, the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Office of Research Safety, the School of Law, University Athletics, University Relations, University Library, and the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences (see Appendix I for full list of Council members).

Involvement and Accomplishments for 2006-2007

Benefits Open Enrollment Survey

After learning that the Benefits Division was not going to have Hewitt and Associates conduct any follow-up surveys regarding open enrollment, NUSAC decided to send one out to the University faculty and staff. We convened an ad hoc subcommittee to develop the survey, post it online, analyze the findings, and produce a report. NUSAC conducted the survey with a view to measuring the success of the new enrollment procedures and tools, gauging perceptions of the University's Open Enrollment communications, and documenting faculty/staff reaction to the revised benefits menu. We chose the Survey Monkey web site to administer the survey and received over 900 responses.

We believe we gathered enough information to be able to discern trends in the employee experience of Open Enrollment and to formulate recommendations for its improvement in the future. The final results of this survey were forwarded to the President, Associate Vice President for Finance, the incoming and outgoing Associate Vice President for Human Resources, the Director of Benefits, and the Chair of the GFC.

Employee of the Year Selection Process and Length of Service Recognition Luncheon

Two NUSAC members participated in the 2006 Employee of the Year selection process coordinated by the Human Resources Training and Development Department. These Council members (and other NUSAC members) then attended the Staff Service Recognition Luncheon on May 1, 2007, which was held in downtown Chicago. Employees who had served 20, 25, 30, 35, or 40 years at the University were honored for their commitment and service. In addition, both the Chicago and Evanston campus winners of the Employee of the Year awards were announced. Members of NUSAC participated in the announcement of the length-of-service honorees and the finalists for the 2006 Employee of the Year awards.

Service Excellence Recognition Luncheon

On January 17, 2007, the Chair and Vice-Chair attended the Service Excellence Recognition Luncheon where more than 60 employees from 30 departments and schools were recognized for their outstanding service to the University. The event included staff members who had been nominated or had received awards multiple times.

Health & Benefits Fair Fall 2006

In October 2006, NUSAC staffed an information table at the University Health & Benefits Fair on the Evanston campus. NUSAC used the opportunity to put a face to our name, meet and talk with staff members, and hear their concerns directly.

New Associate Vice President for Human Resources Search

Two members of NUSAC helped to find a replacement for the Associate Vice President of Human Resources, Guy Miller. Sonya Harrington represented NUSAC on the search committee that narrowed down the field of applicants to three. Jason Grocholski then interviewed the final three candidates with the chair of the GFC and wrote a recommendation to Gene Sunshine based on these interviews.

Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) Association of Professional Staff Councils (APSC)

The CIC continually proves to be an excellent place for collaboration and information sharing. NUSAC continues to actively participate in the CIC through quarterly teleconferences and the annual meeting. The 2006 CIC APSC annual meeting was held October 15-16 at the Big Ten Conference Center and was hosted by the University of Illinois.

State of the University Address 2007

NUSAC collaborated with University Relations, Academic Technologies, and the Information Technology Department to conduct the President's annual State of the University (SOU) Address on March 1, 2007. The live event took place on the Evanston campus in the McCormick Tribune Forum Room and was simultaneously videocast to Thorne Auditorium on the Chicago campus and webcast over the Internet. NUSAC used a varied approach in advertising this important event. In addition to using the event banner feature on the University home page, the NUSAC web site and quarterly newsletter, and University bulk email, NUSAC also had publicity posters displayed at locations on both campuses for a week before the event.

Benefits Committee

The Benefits Committee works directly with the Director of Benefits Division and the Vice President of Human Resources, conveying staff suggestions and concerns related to benefits elections, policies, and procedures, and responds to staff regarding these issues. NUSAC provides a liaison to the GFC Benefits Committee and meets with this committee regularly to collaborate on mutual interests.

Committee Members 2006-07: Jason Grocholski/Jessica Abrams* (Chair), Susan Fox, Dauphine Gregory, Clint Phillips, Sheila Harris

- Worked with the General Faculty Council and Benefits Director to review the new benefit plan changes that occurred during Open Enrollment 2006 and reviewed possible changes for Open Enrollment 2007, including changes to retiree medical plans.
- Suggested that Disability policy be amended to include coverage up to eligibility for Social Security instead of the age 65 as was written in the policy.

* Jason Grocholski and Jessica Abrams split the Chair of this committee. Jason was chair from September – February and Jessica was chair from March – August. It should be further noted that many of the members of the benefits committee worked on the Benefits Open Enrollment Survey subcommittee as described previously.

Benefits Committee Priorities for 2007-08

- Help inform staff of benefits options and raise awareness of underutilized benefits .
- Work with Benefits Director to raise awareness of current health and wellness initiatives for staff and work toward increasing these initiatives.
- Work with Benefits Director to improve communication.

Communications Committee

A key component of NUSAC's mission involves exchanging information with staff on relevant issues. The Communications Committee is responsible for organizing all public relations and media for NUSAC. From drafting and printing the newsletters to updating the web site, the Communications Committee helps maintain NUSAC's positive image at the University.

Committee Members 2006-07: Rebecca Griffiths (Chair), Lynn Steiner, Roseann Mark, Beth Van Riper, Virginia Lorenzo, Natasha Dennison

- Communication with staff – newsletters, web site, bulk mails
- Reformatted and updated the template for the NUSAC web site with assistance from University Relations
- Did research on new promotional items as an additional way to inform staff members about NUSAC
- Discussed new ways to effectively reach out to new staff members and enhance our marketing to current staff

Communication Committee Priorities for 2007-08

- Evaluate the current newsletter content, format, frequency and media in order to reach more staff.
- Keep the web site content current.
- Improve staff awareness of available University resources.
- Explore alternative methods of allowing staff to communicate their concerns to NUSAC (including anonymously).

Human Resources Committee

The Human Resources Committee works directly with the Associate Vice President for Human Resources to discuss policies and procedures, provide feedback, and communicate staff concerns related to matters under the guise of Human Resources. The Associate Vice President, in turn, reports to the Committee on pending matters of staff interest and solicits input from NUSAC on Human Resource issues and related matters.

Committee Members 2006-07: Elizabeth Gladic (Chair), Donald Stephani, Carol Henes, Deborah Cundiff, Sonya Harrington, Shericka Pringle Jackson

- Continued to pose questions to the HR department on behalf of staff members who contacted the committee; relayed responses to the affected staff members.

Human Resources Committee priorities for 2007-08

- Look into ways to improve retention of good staff.
- Encourage managers to support staff who are interested in professional development.
- Solicit feedback from staff regarding job satisfaction.

Last Year's Priorities

- Conduct a Benefits Survey on the 2006 Open Enrollment changes.
- Improve recruitment strategies to attract more NUSAC applicants.

NUSAC Priorities for Upcoming Year 2007-08

- Improve the lines of communication between NUSAC and the staff.
- Investigate ways to improve staff retention and job satisfaction.
- Help inform staff of benefits options and raise awareness of underutilized benefits.