

THE COUNCIL CHRONICLE

NEWS FROM THE SMITH COLLEGE STAFF COUNCIL

FALL 1993

Chair Notes

Usually being chair of Staff Council is fun, but sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the demands. I understand Kevin Skelly's dilemma on how to balance the needs and demands of Staff Council, job responsibilities and the personal demands of living a full life.

This week I have spent several nights in the hospital for two very different reasons. The middle of the week I was there to

provide support for a friend in crisis. On Saturday Oct 23, late in the evening, I went back to the hospital to take part in the arrival of my god-daughter, Hope.

I share this with you, not because I regret being chair, but more because it illustrates why Staff Council is important to me and why I was interested in being Chair. It's all about community. I include Smith College as part of my community because it is where I spend most of my day. Community is all about people and the Smith Community includes the staff. For so long we have not been able to recognize our community as a whole but rather just see the parts we come in contact with as we do our work.

I was intending to write an article with the focus on the philosophical importance of Staff Council. But as I was reminded of the importance of community in my life, I realized that too often we focus on the concrete tasks or tangible goals of Staff Council

as our business, and not our business of building community. Building community is what we do best and I believe we are seeing success. Building community is all about people understanding that they are not isolated and they do have a voice. It's also about understanding that we are not all the same and we constantly need to find better

ways to communicate. It's about recognizing the frustration of those staff who do not have access to computers for information and feel they are being ignored.

It's about being included in

making decisions that affect our jobs. The college administrators are more and more recognizing the importance of including Staff Council in the process of running the college. On that matter we still have bridges to build. But I see those bridges being worked on.

I do feel we are gaining respect, not only with college administrators but most importantly among ourselves. And community is about respect. I have great respect for the women and men of Staff Council and all the college committees, the people who have jobs, family and friends, and still find time to find ways for you to have a voice. If you don't speak up we won't hear you. And community is about involvement. Someone has to do this work or it won't get done. If you want community you have to work for it. It just simply does not happen without someone making it happen. And we are making it happen. —Joan Ballas

It just simply does not happen without someone making it happen. And we are making it happen.

Staff Council Open Forum Agenda

November 23, 1:30–2:30 p.m.

All Smith College staff are invited to the first Staff Council Open Forum for the 1993–94 year. During this forum, staff will be asked to respond to questions submitted by Staff Council committees and college administrators.

Committee Presentations As part of their presentations, Staff Council committees will ask questions of the staff. The resulting answers, and questions, will serve as important staff feedback to committees.

Administrators' Questions Before the forum, each committee will have asked an administrator for a question to be presented to staff.

At-large Committee Staff Member The Nominations and Elections Committee has collected information about staff representatives on at-large committees. These representatives will be introduced and, if time allows, they will briefly report on their work.

Staff Council urges all staff to attend the forum. Through questions, answers and discussions, we hope to obtain feedback on Staff Council's ideas, projects and goals. ♦

COMMITTEE NEWS

Communications

Patricia Hayes, Co-chair—ADM
Cindy Rucci, Co-chair—ADS
Marti Hobbes—ADS **
Karen Korza—ADS
Bob Larose—SER
Chet Saltis—SER *
Louise Walton—ADM

The Communications Committee's primary concerns are campus-wide communication, cultivating a sense of community for staff, and publicizing Staff Council's work.

Campus-wide communication: RADS and Physical Plant (PHPL) staff's lack of access to information. There are two parts to the problem: 1) access to e-mail, 2) mail delivery. Our e-mail idea: provide one centrally located computer terminal within each house and within PHPL, so RADS and PHPL staff can use e-mail daily. We're researching ways to implement this.

The mail delivery problem: getting mail to RADS and PHPL staff in an efficient way. Is there a way to use an already existing route to these scattered locations? What other kinds of deliveries are being made to houses and PHPL locations? We're looking into alternatives to the current system.

Promoting a sense of community: we are laying the foundation for a formal staff appreciation program. While the current program recognizes employees for completing a specific term of service, we would like broaden the appreciation and focus on the talents, hard work, and dedication of all staff. Last year's Staff Art Show was a step in the right direction. We will work to organize a formal program.

We urge staff to talk to us at the community forums, through this newsletter, and through individual Staff Council representatives at any time. We will be distributing the staff council minutes more widely (look for copies to be posted on bulletin boards). We need to know from staff if we are headed in the right direction with our ideas for improved communication, and we need to know if we are overlooking other possibilities.

—Patricia Hayes, Cindy Rucci

Finance and Budget

Mickey Finn, Chair—SER
Cathy Brooks—ADS*
Janet Dibrindisi—ADS *
Jonathan Lovell—ADM **
Jan Maggs—ADM *
Lynne Walton—ADM

The Finance and Budget Committee held its first meeting at the Boat House on scenic Paradise Pond. The usual organizational tasks were completed. Mickey Finn (who left the room at the wrong time) was elected chair of the committee, and Lynne Walton will serve as recording secretary. The committee set about deciding the direction in which it was to go for the year. Everyone seemed to agree that the first order of business was to try and become knowledgeable in the workings of the college budget and finance system. To this end, Budget Director Jonathan Lovell agreed to give the committee an overview of the college financial process.

The committee continues the work of their predecessors in following dining consolidation on campus. We hope to see if things really do continue as projected. This is of interest to many at Smith as it is the beginning of a major change in the make-up of Smith's campus.

Smith employees have a vested interest in the changes occurring on campus and the present and future impact those changes may have on the college community as a whole. The Finance and Budget Committee will try and provide input as it observes this process at work.—Mickey Finn

Nominations and Elections

Kevin Skelly, Chair—SER
Diane Barsell—ADM
Elizabeth Johnson—ADS
Jeff Rankin—SER
Tom Russell—ADM
Matt Russo—SER
Valerie Schumacher—ADS

The Nominations and Elections Committee is charged with the responsibility for the proper conduct of elections for Staff Council and providing campus committees with nominations. The people nominated to committees with the help of Staff Council are asked to report on the progress of those committees.

At the beginning of the school year our immediate task was to fill positions on the Committee for Community Policy, the AIDS Education Committee, the Society Organized Against Racism, and the Civil Rights Grievance Board. Those positions have been filled, and we are now working on refining our system for getting reports back, and generally keeping track of the committees we are dealing with. One concern in this area is that we know what committees exist all over campus, so we can make decisions about which are pertinent to Staff Council. We are also working on the development of forms for keeping track of committees, their contact persons, who we've appointed, their term of membership, and for reporting back to Staff Council.

Anybody who is interested in joining a particular committee or who is interested in being involved either in a Staff Council committee, or a campus committee can contact us by mailing through campus mail to Staff Council.—Kevin Skelly

Personnel Policy

Gina Livolsi, Chair—ADM *
Marion Abrams—ADS
Kathleen Casey—ADM **
Janet Durkin—ADM
Jenny Miller—SER *
Tracy Warton—SER
Kathy Yarnell—ADS

According to the staff charter, the Personnel Policy Committee is responsible for examination, review and comment on college personnel policy. Ours is the trickiest group in terms of definitions and boundaries, since staff council cannot legally deal with terms of employment. Within our jurisdiction, however, we can pass along staff concerns to the administration and ask for clarification on existing policies.

The committee's appointed member, Kathleen Casey, meets regularly to help answer questions and provide background to the group on a number of policy issues. During its first meeting of this year, the Personnel Policy Committee discussed making staff aware of "hidden benefits" in the form of resources and services available on campus. We mailed out an information survey to the libraries, the botanic garden, the athletics department and others, and the results of that survey appear on page 4 of this newsletter.

Our current topic for our discussion, clarification, and potential recommendations is tuition reimbursement. Some questions that have been raised by staff are: How reasonable are the limits of release time for classes given the extra time commitments of lab, art and other courses? How may someone appeal for an exception? Should people in degree programs be treated differently policy-wise? Should the relevance of the course to your job responsibilities make a difference?

If you have questions or comments about this policy or others, please contact one of us directly or send a message to our committee through campus mail, addressed to Staff Council.—*Janet Durkin*

Staff Development

Mary Lou Bouley, Chair—ADM
 Lea Ahlen—ADM
 Kathleen Chatwood—ADM **
 Sylvia Crafts—SER
 Anita Hickey—ADS *
 Michele LaRock—SER
 Lucinda Williams—ADS *

The Staff Development subcommittee of Staff Council has been working to find ways of improving life on campus for all staff members. We are concerned about inequities among departments in terms of permission granted for release time to attend meetings, workshops, forums, etc. What is routinely granted in one department may not be "allowed" in another. Most of us are sensitive to the needs of our respective offices or areas, and are willing to be creative in finding solutions to this problem. One of our suggestions is to have mandatory guidelines for supervisors, so they understand the importance of staff meeting and working together. We can all benefit from interaction

with other departments, as well as from the training that is available to us.

We have discussed communication and the problems inherent with such a divided campus. Since this also falls to the communication subcommittee, we will seek to meet with them on this issue. Good communication is key to staff development.

Library tours will resume next semester, with the help of the library staff, and we will look at other opportunities on campus that we might bring to staff.

Kathleen Chatwood introduced us to the Workplace Education Grant, which will provide training and courses for union members. This is a high priority in today's workplace as service jobs become more technologically advanced.

We have discussed the Needs Assessment Survey and how to make it work for us by pointing out staff needs and concerns about training. Hopefully, our (all staff) input will elicit the type of workshops and training that will be most beneficial to us.

We are looking forward to a productive year, and welcome comments and concerns from all staff.—*Mary Lou Bouley*

Steering

Joan Ballas, Chair—ADM
 Scott Girard—SER
 Jay Greco—ADM
 Jonathan Lovell—ADM **
 Jay Lucey—SER
 Cindy Rucci—ADS
 Stacey Schmeidel—ADM **
 Bill Sheehan—ADM
 Nancy Slator—ADS

As Chair of Staff Council I also serve as Chair of the Steering committee. My responsibilities as Chair include setting the agenda for the Steering Committee meetings. The agenda is important because it determines what issues will be discussed at Steering Committee meetings. Why is this important to know? The Steering Committee is responsible for the overall functioning of Staff Council and the members of the Steering Committee can be contacted if you have a specific concern about Staff Council. Any Staff Council member is also able to bring issues to the table for discussions and I encourage you to contact either Steering Committee members or your representative(s) to bring your concerns to our attention.

We have just begun our work for the year and there are many issues we are concerned with and will continue to be reviewing. At the first meeting I asked the members to discuss and offer guidelines for actions I may take as Chair. As Chair, many times during the month, I am called upon to either make decisions or comment on Staff Council business. Between meetings there is much activity going with other committees and I along with the Chairs of those committees must make decisions that affect Staff Council. It is appropriate for Steering Committee to consider the overall picture of Staff Council and make recommendations to the full Staff Council how best to proceed. But because we only meet once a month it is difficult to discuss and make decisions during the rest of the month. The general consensus was to trust that as Chair, I will consider what is best for Staff Council. Not an easy task with such a diverse committee and a diverse community. The committee also helps structure the general Staff Council meetings and at the October Staff Council meeting we began to discuss the November Open Forum, Staff Council will be hosting. As the Communications Committee prepares to put out this first newsletter, the Steering Committee has been working with them to consider the content and format.

As our second year progresses we will be concerned with other issues such as how best to communicate with all staff. Staff Council is well aware that certain groups on campus are isolated and do not have the same communication tools such as e-mail to get information which other staff have easy access. Our new e-mail account STAFFCOUNCIL should be seen as just another tool (but not the only tool) we will use to figure out how best to communicate with all staff.—*Joan Ballas*

ADM	administrative staff
ADS	administrative support staff
SER	service staff
*	at-large member
**	appointee

Did You Know??

The following is a brief sampling of services available to staff at Smith:

Non-Print Resource Center One week loan of collection's videotapes (except those on reserve).

Museum of Art Free admission to the internationally-recognized museum (Tuesday through Sunday 12-4 p.m. and Thursday from 12-8 p.m.). The museum's collection of about 24,000 objects represents a variety of cultures and a wide spectrum of media, ranging in date from 2500 B.C. to the present. Special programs (many of which are free) include gallery talks, evening seminars, family programs, holiday concerts, and bus trips to other museums. Call 2760 for more information.

Ainsworth Gymnasium Services that are free include access for employees and their families to the weight room, swimming pool, tennis courts and all gym space. There is also free testing in the Human Performance Lab, free locker space and free equipment loans for tennis, croquet, badminton, outdoor volleyball setup, soccer, cross-country skiing and

even skates. Faculty/staff tennis league meets twice a week; faculty/staff badminton is offered Tues. & Thurs. and faculty/staff basketball is on Mon., Wed., & Fri. Personal rental of the field house is offered at a reduced rate for employees and aerobics and yoga classes are offered at lower rates because the college supplements the cost.

Botanical Gardens The greenhouses are free and open 365 days a year. In addition, the staff will consult with employees about plant health and landscape problems and will repot office plants.

Josten Library Staff may borrow from the circulating collection in music, theatre, and dance. They also have in-house access to all library materials, including a collection of some 50,000 sound recordings.

Young Science Library All services of the library are available for staff, including the collection of 124,000 science-related books (the largest collection of an undergraduate liberal arts library in the U.S.), periodicals, maps and microforms. Staff may also search the databases on CD-ROM (Compact disc read-only memory). These resources are

powerful and flexible way to search for scientific information using author, title, or key words. Call 2950 for more information or stop by the reference desk for an orientation sheet to this library.—*Personnel Policy Committee*

New Employee Video

The October 21 community forum was also the premiere of the new employee video. Produced by Kathleen Chatwood and Jeff Heath, the video's purpose is to orient new staff and introduce them to some faces and departments across campus. Current council members Jeff Rankin and Mickey Finn are interviewed along with other staff, explaining their roles at Smith, their departments and passing along their advice to new employees. Staff Council is mentioned by several people as an important means of increasing communication and participation of employees.

The video was commissioned by Human Resources to supplement an orientation program for new staff that was started this summer. It is also available on request for departmental staff meetings.—*Janet Durkin*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions from staff should be addressed to Staff Council and sent to the Staff Council mailbox at Central Services.

Q Did the Office of Human Resources consult with or get input from Staff Council on the recent changes in compensatory time and flexible scheduling? If not, can we expect HR to continue to make policy affecting staff without consulting Staff Council?—*Chrissie Bell*

A The changes to the college's compensatory time policy were required to comply with both federal and state regulations. These regulations require that time worked by administrative support staff be compensated, either by wages or by paid time off, within the payroll week in which the work is performed. These requirements invalidated the college's previous compensatory time policy.

From the time that Staff Council was originally established, we have all been aware that federal labor law limits the subjects that Staff Council can deal with. The decision of the National Labor Relations Board in the Electromation case last year confirmed that employee groups like Staff Council are precluded from "dealing with" an employer re-

garding wages, hours of work, and terms and conditions of employment. The compensatory time policy and flexible schedule policy fall within these categories.

While Staff Council is precluded from dealing with or negotiating with the college regarding such policies, we can notify Staff Council, as we did in this case, for the information of its officers and members, regarding matters of employment policies. Before issuing the September 29 memo which explained the revised compensatory time and flexible scheduling policies, Jan Keefe conferred with Joan Ballas, Chair of Staff Council, to explain the changes in the policy and to advise her of the method and timeframe for communicating these changes to department heads and staff.—*Jan Keefe, Director of Human Resources*

Q Smith has stated that because they are a private institution they don't have to declare the holiday [Columbus Day], and are not subject to the "Blue Laws." However, according to the law these holidays must be observed. (Employee has a copy of the holi-

day observance rules which states that *all* of-fices will be closed.)—*unsigned*

A The "Blue Laws" legislate which businesses may be open on Sundays and state holidays. In response to our inquiries, inspectors in both the Boston and Springfield offices of the Department of Labor stated that the Blue Laws apply to retail and manufacturing operations. We were advised that the Blue Laws do not apply to private educational institutions and that there is nothing in the statute to prohibit a private college from conducting its operations on certain non-mandated state holidays such as Columbus Day, Washington's Birthday, etc. The University of Massachusetts, as a state institution, is required to grant these holidays—the private institutions, Amherst, Mt. Holyoke, Hampshire and Smith—do not. Other holidays such as Memorial Day, Independence Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, etc., are observed by both public and private employers.

Personal days are granted for use by employees who wish to be off on non-mandated state holidays such as Columbus Day.

—*Jan Keefe, Director of Human Resources*

WHO'S WHO ON STAFF COUNCIL

The following is a comprehensive list of who serves on Staff Council and how to get in touch with them. We hope that you will find it a useful tool for bringing issues to our attention. —*Cindy Rucci*

Marion Abrams (ADS) Billing/Insurance Assistant, Mason Infirmary, ext. 2822, e-mail: AISVAX::MABRAMS, Personnel Policy Committee

Lea Ahlen (ADM) Office Manager, Social Sciences, Wright 15, ext. 3530, e-mail: AISVAX::LAHLEN, Staff Development Committee

Joan Ballas (ADM) Systems Coordinator, Registrar's Office, ext. 2553, e-mail: AISVAX::JBALLAS, Chair of Staff Council, Chair of Steering Committee

Diane Barsell (ADM) Residence & Dining Services Supervisor, 30 Belmont, ext. 2300, no e-mail, Nominations and Elections Committee

Mary Lou Bouley (ADM) Cataloguer, Tech. Serv., Neilson Library, ext. 2925, e-mail: SMITH::MBOULEY, Chair of Staff Development Committee

Sylvia Crafts (SER) Catering Dining Rm. Asst., Smith College Club, ext. 2341, no e-mail, Staff Development Committee

Janet Durkin (ADM) Assistant Director of College Relations, Garrison Hall, ext. 2170, e-mail: AISVAX::JDURKIN, Personnel Policy Committee

Mickey Finn (SER) Boatman, Physical Plant, 126 West St. ext. 2400, no e-mail, Chair of Finance and Budget Committee

Scott Girard (SER) Custodian, Alumnae House, ext. 2034, e-mail: AISVAX::SGIRARD, Steering Committee

Jay Greco (ADM) Systems Analyst, Info. Systems, Stoddard, ext. 2998, e-mail: SMITH::JGRECO, Steering Committee

Patricia Hayes (ADM) Assistant Director of Publications, Garrison Hall, ext. 2180, e-mail: AISVAX::PHAYES, Co-Chair of Communications Committee

Elizabeth Johnson (ADS) Administrative Assistant, Affirmative Action Office, ext. 2141, e-mail: AISVAX::EMJOHNSON, Nominations and Elections Committee

Karen Korza (ADS) Administrative Assistant, Purchasing, 30 Belmont Ave., ext. 2252, e-mail: AISVAX::KKORZA, Communications Committee

Michele LaRock (SER) Floater Dining Room Assistant, Comstock Kitchen, ext. 2382, no e-mail, Staff Development Committee

Bob Larose (SER) Electrician, Physical Plant, 126 West St, ext. 2411, no e-mail, Communications Committee

Jonathan Lovell (ADM) Budget Director, College Hall 4, ext. 2207, e-mail: AISVAX::JLOVELL, Steering Committee; Finance & Budget Committee

Jay Lucey (SER) HVAC Mechanic, Central Chiller Plant, ext. 2462, no e-mail, Steering Committee

Jeff Rankin (SER) Gardener, Capen Gardens, ext. 2748 (Greenhouse), no e-mail, Nominations and Elections Committee

Cindy Rucci (ADS) MARC Cataloguer, Technical Services, Neilson; ext. 2923, e-mail: SMITH::CRUCCI, Staff Council Secretary, Steering Committee, Co-Chair of Communications Committee

Tom Russell (ADM) Physical Plant, ext. 2458, e-mail: AISVAX::TRUSSELL, Nominations and Elections Committee

Matt Russo (SER) Floater Cook, Cutter Kitchen, ext. 2300, no e-mail, Nominations and Elections Committee

Stacey Schmeidel (ADM) Director of Media Relations, Garrison Hall, ext. 2190, e-mail: AISVAX::SSCHMEIDEL, Steering Committee

Valerie Schumacher (ADS) Student Employment/Funds Coordinator, Financial Aid Office, ext. 2530, e-mail: AISVAX::VSCHUMACHER, Nominations and Elections Committee

Bill Sheehan (ADM) Chief Accountant, Controller's Office, ext. 2222, e-mail: AISVAX::WSHEEHAN, Vice-Chair of Staff Council, Steering Committee

Kevin Skelly (SER) Floater Senior Cook, Northrop Kitchen, ext. 2373, e-mail: SMITH::KSKELLY, Chair of Nominations and Elections Committee

Nancy Slator (ADS) Receptionist/Secretary, College Hall 27, ext. 3000, e-mail: AISVAX::NSLATOR, Steering Committee

Louise Walton (ADM) Assistant Director of Ada Comstock Scholar Program, College Hall 32, ext. 3090, e-mail: AISVAX::LMWALTON, Communications Committee

Lynne Walton (ADM) Assistant for Administration, Graduate Office, Lilly 106, ext. 3052, e-mail: AISVAX::LAWALTON, Staff Council Treasurer; Finance & Budget Committee

Tracey Wharton (SER) Pruner/Propagator, Botanic Gardens, Plant House, ext. 2748, 2739, no e-mail, Personnel Policy Committee

Kathy Yarnell (ADS) Administrative Assistant, Campus School, Gill Hall, ext. 3270, e-mail: AISVAX::KYARNELL, Personnel Policy Committee

THE COUNCIL CHRONICLE

The Council Chronicle reports the actions and efforts of the Smith College Staff Council, an elected body representing all Smith College staff. The newsletter also serves as a vehicle for Smith College staff to express individual viewpoints.

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LETTERS

Letters of personal opinion are submitted to *The Council Chronicle* by Smith College staff and do not represent the views of the Staff Council.

To The Council Chronicle:

If you are reading this letter, you probably do not work in Physical Plant or Residence and Dining Services. For as long as I have been at Smith (about four years), I have heard about the inconsistencies and difficulties getting communication to staff in these areas. As a communicator by profession, I feel frustrated that information to and from Staff Council or any other group on campus excludes certain staff because the systems of distributing mail are inadequate and computer mail is not widely available or easy for some to access. As a member of the staff and the Staff Council, I want to raise the issue of communication with Physical Plant and RADS, call for suggestions for changes, and work toward finally ensuring that the most basic of benefits—an individual link to other members of the campus community—be extended to employees in these departments. I understand that the Communications Committee is looking at ways to extend computer access to all staff and I endorse their efforts.

—Janet Durkin
Office of College Relations

To The Council Chronicle:

I am writing to state my opinion on the tiresome 925 union organizing efforts. The activities of union organizers make clear to me that their plan is not to “inform” staff about 925 but to “persuade” using peer pressure, one-on-one “social” meetings, half-

truths, and falsehoods like a recent printed notice which was posted this past October holiday: “If we had a union, we’d get time and a half today.”

Staff who oppose the union do so for a variety of reasons including: satisfaction with opportunities and benefits at the college; a belief that bargaining will result in losses; and a lack of faith in the leadership of the 925 union committee. In addition to these and other reasons, I place a very high value on my independence. That independence is threatened by a union that would eliminate my choice not to join the union. (925 union organizers have stated that they would fight for a closed shop.) By forbidding me to dissent from the union party line, the union would further silence my voice. And, through a strike, the union would impose on me an impossible financial loss. Thank you, but these are “bargains” I will not elect.

—Cynthia Di Geromino
Office of the Dean of the Faculty

To The Council Chronicle:

Many of us are glad that the college has improved our life insurance and disability insurance benefits. At the same time, however, we should all be asking why we were not consulted, through Staff Council, about what benefits we want. There are several unanswered questions concerning these enhanced benefits: Are they being funded by cutback in other areas, e.g., an increase in Campus School tuition, or a steep fee for

parking stickers? (Ruth Constantine and Mary Maples Dunn informed us of the latter increase at a Community Forum last April.) Is the college subsidizing these improved benefits simply by shifting money from one of our pockets to the other?

When Staff Council was formed we were assured of a consultative role on issues which affected us. Employee benefits is an issue which directly affects our compensation, yet we were not asked what we wanted, we were told what we would get. As our duly elected representatives, the members of Staff Council should be representing us in these matters. Instead we continue to be “represented” by committees selected and appointed by Human Resources and the President.

I ask that all members of the staff think seriously about their input (or lack thereof) in the decision-making process at Smith.

—Mary Ann Phoenix
Office of the Dean of the Faculty

The Council Chronicle welcomes letters of personal opinion. Letters should be no more than 100 words, should be addressed to Staff Council, and sent to the Staff Council mailbox at Central Services.

All submissions must be accompanied by the author's name, campus address, and extension. Names will be withheld from publication only at the author's request.