

Staff Council February 2026 Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 | Hybrid: Lewis Center #1002 & Zoom | 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Present: Christina Bowman, Cynthia Delgadillo, Aesha Engeldinger, Scott Gabbert, Nancy Hashimoto, Erin Herrmann, Tom Judge, Erin Kasprzak, Ani Mauricio, Reina Nomura, Scott Ozaroski, Claire Paetsch, Shiloh Psujek, Damien Rodriguez, Mildred Santiago, Laura Swierzbis, Erin Thier, Victoria Van Kirk Pride, Katy Weseman

Absent excused: Kathia Hernandez

Absent not excused: none

1. Professional Development – Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

- a. LGBTQ Faculty and Staff Network (Grace Jacques)
 - i. Has been around for over 10 years; supports all LGBTQ+ faculty and staff at the university and welcomes allies as well.
 - a) Grace Jacques – Chair
 - b) Grace Baum Mayer – Social Media and Communications Coordinator
 - c) Hannah Kinsella – Event and Programming Coordinator
 - d) Sophia Sanchez – Ex officio member
 - e) Heather Montes Ireland – Ex officio member
 - ii. Network gathering 1 – 2 times per quarter; remote and in-person events. Offers both their own programming and collaboration programming (UCAPS, HR, etc.). Most people are looking for community gathering spaces at this time.
 - iii. Ways to contact: lgbtqnetwork@depaul.edu; @lgbtqnetworkdpu (Instagram); Teams channel; ERG opt-in form.
- b. Jewish Faculty Staff Alliance (Craig Klugman)
 - i. Fairly new group, started in October 2024. Aims to support equity and inclusion of our Jewish faculty and staff, foster community, and promote advocacy work; open to everyone.
 - ii. Does programming with Jewish Life Center and Hillel plus other groups within the community and across the country. Typically hold events once a quarter with a mix of students, faculty, and staff.
 - iii. Resource for faculty, staff, students, and the administration; focus is on creating a safe space for Jewish people to come together in community. Currently helping to create a new Jewish alumni group for DePaul.
 - iv. Three leaders – Craig Klugman, Jessica Choplin, and Ellen Gutiontov
 - v. Sends out a listserv update about once a week to with updates and goings on.
- c. Muslim Faculty and Staff Affinity Group (Nur Uysal)
 - i. Relatively new group, less than two years old. Established by Muslim faculty, staff, and students to hold space for community building. The group is not trying to define ourselves by our religion but more open to bringing people in, having interfaith dialogue, and learning about each other and their experiences. This is the first ERG of its kind so there's been lots of excellent growth over the last couple of years.
 - ii. Hosts programming throughout the year like book discussions, Muslim portrayals in the media, documentary discussions, etc. Right now we're focusing on current issues and how members of the Muslim community might feel, promoting a space of understanding, connection, and belonging.
 - iii. Ramadan starts today so have had recent events and conversations about the holiday – fasting, avoiding materialistic things, and being reflective. Having lots of discussions about what the holiday represents and means to Muslims and how to support students, staff, and faculty who are practicing Ramadan and their schedule changes.
 - iv. People can join through the ERG opt-in form on the website; this is the best way to hear

- 52 about upcoming events.
- 53 d. DePaul Parent Connection (Nancy Hashimoto)
- 54 i. Started organically in 2015 with parents around campus (combination of informal groups).
- 55 We have hosted numerous brown bag discussions on a variety of topics like how to start
- 56 off the school year, parenting life hacks, navigating CPS, work-life balance, etc. There've
- 57 been some professional development sessions as well that incorporated members who
- 58 have specific expertise come in to talk about particular topics (e.g., reading literacy in
- 59 children, parenting with social justice).
- 60 ii. Take Your Child to Work Day (started in 2017, resurrected last year) – lots of great
- 61 participation around the University and focused on showcasing different areas of the
- 62 institution to highlight all sorts of the work people do (e.g., Marketing – how to convince
- 63 your parent to let you get a pet; Theatre – mask and costume building); hoping to do this
- 64 again soon.
- 65 iii. Pulled back a bit and haven't had much movement/activity over the last year or so, but
- 66 we're open to anyone who is a parent or might be a parent soon and would love to have
- 67 more people join!
- 68 e. Latinx Empowered at DePaul – LEAD (Eunice Amador)
- 69 i. Focused on community building events – last three years did Lunch and Paletas where
- 70 people are invited to have lunch in a nice space outside and have paletas from a local
- 71 vendor; holiday event hosted most years in December; Lunch and Learns in winter quarter
- 72 (did one with UCAPS last year); coffee and lunch hours. Goal is to alternate campuses for
- 73 events and partner with other Latino/Latinx groups for events as well.
- 74 ii. Lost communication person from their board in the layoffs so working to get this back up
- 75 and running as soon as possible to continue building their community (last email was in
- 76 November); LEAD@depaul.edu
- 77 f. DePaul Women's Network (Gwenyth Bailey Knorr)
- 78 i. One of the oldest and largest ERGs at DePaul; has a proud history of collaboration with
- 79 the other ERGs and is open to everybody.
- 80 ii. Hosts numerous events like faculty forums, book club, quarterly happy hours, and a
- 81 service event in the spring. Hosted a winter event with the School of Music last night,
- 82 which was a great event.
- 83 iii. Still rebuilding after COVID, but the new ERG sign-up page has been super helpful, and
- 84 we'd love to see more people at events.

85

86 **2. Guest Speakers – Dania Matos and Kimberlie Goldsberry (BEAM)**

- 87 a. New Division of Belonging, Engagement, and Mission (BEAM) – work on BEAM began before
- 88 Dania arrived and has been an ongoing journey to develop a better structure for anchoring our
- 89 mission in the work we do to support students, staff, and faculty.
- 90 i. BEAM is connected to thriving and the new thriving initiatives, and a lot of work has been
- 91 done in phases to integrate collective feedback and also implementing a tiered approach
- 92 to the prioritizations.
- 93 b. Thinking about providing a structure for students to feel supported, seen, and connected to
- 94 purpose; brings together engagement opportunities, identity-affirming support, and DePaul's
- 95 Vincentian mission. There was a need for shared language and we want to hold ourselves
- 96 accountable to that promise; belonging is not a program but a practice.
- 97 i. Mission (the WHY) and Thriving (the WHAT & HOW)
- 98 c. BEAM Focus Areas – Student Success & Thriving, Student Wellbeing, Campus Life. Looked at
- 99 how existing areas would fit into this new division; many of the units continue to be in their same
- 100 focus area but just have a new name or 'umbrella' area.
- 101 i. Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity (OIDE) is continuing and evolving under a new
- 102 name, **Office of Institutional Equity & Thriving**
- 103 ii. Academic Continuity and Engagement, Office of Multicultural Student Success, and
- 104 Cultura and Resource Centers are coming together to form the **Center for Student**
- 105 **Success and Thriving**; CRCs will now be referred to as **Thriving Centers**, but the
- 106 spaces will retain their names
- 107 iii. University Counseling and Psychological Services (UCAPS) and Office of Health

Promotion and Wellness are merging to become the **Center for Counselling and Wellness**

iv. Student Centers rebranded to **Student Centers and Event Services**

d. Student Services Changes – eliminated part-time in-house psychiatry services (12 hours weekly) due to required student health insurance changes; modifications made to student desk operations in LPC on-campus apartments, now staffed 16hrs per day instead of 24/7 (not staffed from 8AM – 4PM when most students are in); hours of operation in Loop Life office (managed by Student Involvement) were reduced as their work is being recalibrated; general programming and student service funds have been impacted.

e. Ellen Fingado is now the Assistant Vice President of Wellbeing for the Division of Student Affairs and Leslie Watland is the new Dean of Students.

f. Cross-collaboration between units – Thriving and Student Success, Dialogue & Community Care, and Vincentian Mission & Formation; each area has a co-lead that works directly with BEAM leadership.

i. This has been an intentional connection to the Designing DePaul Strategic Plan subcommittees (long-term sustainable initiative instead of short-term like the Strategic Plan is intended to be).

ii. Incorporates Thriving priorities and different data gathering options to gather metrics.

g. Q&A

i. *Q: What are the expected student outcomes for BEAM? I am concerned that with the complications of the new website launching, these name changes will confuse current students and will deter them from services.* A: The website transformation for BEAM will likely take 6-8 months and we acknowledge the concern you share. We are working on a landing page for BEAM that will connect to the existing OIDE and Student Affairs home pages to begin this transformation and what needs to be in the internal portal and on the external website. The Digital Engagement team is already working on this and is aware of these being top priorities. Also, the metrics group will hold us accountable to student service outcomes.

ii. *Q: Other than the name changes and the reduction of student services, how does this help our students? For example, the Thriving Centers used to be led by Jane Baron who is no longer here. How will these centers be supported now?* A: These areas faced reductions just like the rest of the University and this is something we've acknowledged throughout the process. We've ensured that the work done by people who were laid off is being continued through all offices that have been impacted by reductions and we've been recalibrating the work they do to achieve their goals.

iii. *Q: This seems as though it removes staff from the equation. Faculty have an AVP D&E, so do staff just have ERGs now and that's it?* A: One of the first things Dania brought up was 'How does staff fit into this structure?' so we're actively working to find ways to connect staff throughout all of this. There was a big need for these types of resources already so we want to be intentional about how this will be structured and incorporated going forward.

iv. *Q: Where are the 'becoming a Hispanic-Service Institution' and 'closing the achievement gap in 10-years' time for students of color to graduate at the same rate of their peers' initiatives that were led by OIDE?* A: A couple things are happening right now – we hosted sessions with ANAPISI and Black Student groups over the summer to start addressing what would an Illinois designation look like for these areas. We're also looking at hosting a summit at DePaul focused on Latinx students and their needs that gets at the work needed for the HIS designation. The particulars of these pieces are still being established but all of this previous work is being directly integrated into the thriving and student success work that BEAM is focused on.

3. Meeting called to order at 2:59pm. February agenda approved.

4. **Staff Speaks**

a. *Q: I was planning vacation time and am unsure on how many vacation days I'll have because we're still waiting on the Summer Hours to be announced. Is there any way to push the question to follow up on the extra days we had last year and if they will/won't be given out this year?* A:

164 Scott has been in touch with HR about this and they're in the process of figuring out what the
165 situation will be and hope to have updates soon.

166 b. *Comment:* I just want to hold space for those of us who have lost friends and colleagues to the
167 layoffs, and those of us who have increased workloads due to the layoffs.

168

169 5. Officer Updates

170 a. **President's Update**, Scott Ozaroski

171 i. President's Strategic Planning Council (Joint Council)

172 a) Had a brainstorming session in groups at the last session – getting into levers to pull
173 moving forward and how those changes would impact our financial outlooks. The
174 Strategic Plan sub-committee leaders also presented on their groups and what work
175 they've started.

176 • We've asked multiple times that the list of the people on the Strategic Planning
177 committees be announced and are hoping this will come out ASAP.

178 ii. Provost search

179 a) Search is actively ongoing – first two candidates have been to campus and the third
180 is coming tomorrow. Two candidates rescinded their applications as they accepted
181 jobs elsewhere. All staff are encouraged to attend these sessions to get the most
182 feedback possible for recommendations to be put together for the President.

183 iii. Employee Anniversary event (Thursday, April 2nd)

184 a) The event went away during COVID and we brought it back last year; with budget
185 cuts, we were unsure if we could have it again this year, but we've been able to get
186 the funds for the event and are putting plans in place to ensure this is guaranteed
187 each year.

188 b) The event this year will be a luncheon in Cortelyou Commons. Full lists of employees
189 and their start date info exist across multiple areas so HR is working to compile that
190 information before invites are sent out. If you are someone who is celebrating an
191 anniversary this year and doesn't get the invitation, please reach out so we can get
192 you added to the list.

193 iv. Officers Meeting with President Rob

194 a) Talked at length about the website rollout – concerns, issues, timeline, lack of
195 communication, etc.; Rob was very receptive to our feedback which came not just
196 from us, but all our colleagues across the University.

197 • Functionality for current and prospective students is up from our previous
198 website.

199 • Recognized that the website launch was not good and they're actively working
200 through fixing things so please continue to put in tickets as you encounter
201 issues.

202 • The new internal myDePaul portal hasn't been publicized as much, but info
203 sessions have been announced so please sign up for sessions to learn more.

204 • Huge shout-out to all our colleagues in IS who've been working around the
205 clock to get things fixed!

206 b) Got a small preview of what Bob Wachowski will be talking about at our next SC
207 meeting regarding potential security updates.

208 c) Discussed the rumor mill surrounding the Provost search and the President's
209 involvement (e.g., picking only external candidates); the President is not involved in
210 the search process and is only the one to make the final selection.

211 d) Talked about the confusion around large-scale messaging – the trickle-down
212 messaging hasn't been effective or working and Rob will take this back to his cabinet
213 to discuss this further to see what can be done.

214

215 b. **Vice President's Update**, Laura Swierzbina

216 i. Faculty Council

217 a) Recap of the Faculty Town Hall, which had 175 attendees. Big concerns were

- 218 budget and federal regulations around student loans; library cut concerns; provost
219 search updates, including that the Board of Trustees and President have no input
220 during the search process and bringing a 5th candidate because someone dropped
221 out.
- 222 b) Faculty Council formed a Task Force to learn more about Maxient, with members
223 from each college/school.
 - 224 c) Valerie Johnson presented annual faculty diversity report. Student body is
225 diversifying faster than the faculty body.
 - 226 d) Q&A with Salma Ghanem. Salma told departments to cut an amount, but didn't
227 dictate what should be cut, like travel, etc. \$1 Billion endowment is small per student.
- 228 ii. Strategic Plan steering committee
 - 229 a) Steering Committee met with all co-chairs of the 5 committees to discuss and go
230 over the current plans. Biggest takeaway is that some initiatives will have a much
231 longer timeline than others. The Loop Campus committee, for example, will not be
232 making any decisions about the Loop Campus in the near future. The timeline is
233 stretched over multiple years because they first have to determine how to do a
234 feasibility study to determine the cost of any potential changes. President Rob is
235 sharing initial findings at the March Board of Trustees meeting.
 - 236 iii. Upcoming elections
 - 237 a) The Elections Committee is Laura Swierzbins (VP), Christina Bowman
238 (Communications Chair), and Tom Judge (from Membership & Engagement,
239 because Kathia is up for re-election and therefore can't serve). We will present a
240 timeline to Steering next week for approval. There will be 15 open spots.
 - 241 iv. Budget updates
 - 242 a) January's Staff Council retreat catering cost \$585. Printing and mailing Staff Council
243 calendars cost \$738.
- 244
- 245 c. **Secretary's Update**, Shiloh Psujek
 - 246 i. For SC members, the notes from our retreat have been uploaded to the January 2026
247 Retreat folder in Teams. Reina will be discussing what we synthesized from our retreat
248 later this meeting and we'll continue to provide updates to staff at large on any initiatives
249 and/or changes that SC moves forward with.
- 250

251 6. Update – Committee Reports

- 252 a. Communications: Christina Bowman
 - 253 i. Continuing work on the newsletter, thank you to Erin H for all your work on this! We're
254 planning to keep the structure of doing the newsletter messaging on Teams to collect
255 content as it worked well this time.
 - 256 ii. Christina has created an intake form that SC members can fill out as a central way to
257 collect info; always looking for early notification on info that any of the committees want to
258 send out so please submit items as soon as you finalize them.
- 259 b. Diversity, Mission, and Inclusion: Damien Rodriguez
 - 260 i. Planning for our second DMI event on Thursday, April 23rd from 2 – 3:30PM in J.
261 Richardson Library – *Stronger Together: Building Support for Mental Wellbeing*; DePaul
262 alum J. Mori Johnson will come to present and speak at the event. The first hour will be a
263 workshop and the remaining half hour will be discussion. An announcement went out in
264 the last newsletter and another will be in the March newsletter as well.
 - 265 ii. A new Belonging group is creating a Teams page and a calendar to be able to share
266 events with SC and ERGs; intended to be a way to know about future Belonging events
267 and how we can support them.
 - 268 iii. A Chicago Sun Times article recently came out that accused DePaul and Loyola of
269 pushing low-income students to take out higher loans. We're hoping DePaul has a
270 response to this as it goes against what we know to be our process for admitting students,
271 loan processes, supporting low-income students, etc.
- 272 c. Effectiveness: Erin Kasprzak

- 273 i. Had a call for the Speech and Expression Advisory Committee – a letter has been sent to
274 the person who was selected and they will be announced in the next newsletter.
- 275 ii. Planning to have an announcement in March about how the award nomination process will
276 go this year for the Staff Excellence Award, the Diversity Award, and coordinating with the
277 Gerald Paetsch Advising Award and the Spirit of DePaul award.
- 278 d. Membership & Engagement: Claire Paetsch (Kathia absent)
- 279 i. We'll be hosting an online pet parade Show and Tell on Monday, February 23rd, more
280 details to come soon.
- 281 ii. Staff Council candidate gatherings and info sessions are being finalized – currently
282 planned for 2/24 at 3PM in LPC, 2/25 at 3PM online, and 2/26 at 3PM in the Loop. An
283 email with more info will come out soon but we may need to shift these dates if we need
284 more time to get staff informed about the upcoming elections.
- 285 e. Staff Resources: Reina Nomura
- 286 i. Calendars have been fully distributed!
- 287 ii. Inquiries about changes to employee discounts to parking – a general email about
288 changes to the parking garage systems in LPC went out to the university community in
289 December, but it didn't give specifics.
- 290 a) Switching companies to Metropolis means discounts can no longer be offered for
291 single-use parking due to the way their system works. There used to be an attendant
292 that could process the discount, but the new system is entirely automated, so
293 discounts can only be short-term (e.g., for a one-day event). We pushed back as
294 much as we could on this, but it seems like there's no way this can be changed.
- 295 iii. Inquiries about changes to staff discounts to dining – employee discount will remain at
296 15% for the rest of this month and will go down to 10% starting in March as this is
297 Aramark's standard (Chartwells discount was 15%).
- 298 iv. Committee is brainstorming ideas about doing a similar event to the December 17th event
299 or other projects that will help address specific needs that came up at that event.
- 300 f. Fiscal (SRAC Rep): Victoria Van Kirk Pride
- 301 i. Most recent SRAC meetings have been moved or cancelled to accommodate the provost
302 search, updates to our census data, and developments to the One Big Beautiful Bill. Next
303 SRAC meeting is scheduled for this Friday.
- 304 ii. SC sent out a survey to all staff to gather feedback – had 83 viable responses (removing
305 duplicates, blanks, or partial).
- 306 a) General concerns were about layoffs, staffing, and the student impact; general tone
307 was wanting to center on mission-alignment, fairness and transparency, new
308 workloads, etc.
- 309 b) The survey link will be closed this Friday and any further comments can be sent to
310 the SC email. This survey was entirely done by SC (not the larger university
311 community) to help the SRAC rep and SC President put together items and concrete
312 data to bring to SRAC discussions as the budget process continues.

313

314 **7. Unfinished Business**

- 315 a. Endorsement of Blue Demon Card & Biometric Login policies
- 316 i. SC will be endorsing both policies – have read over both, had discussions, and had our
317 questions answered.
- 318

319 **8. New Business**

- 320 a. Updates from December staff support event – *Finding Community and Virtual Support*
- 321 i. Fully virtual, 1 hour event on 12/17 for staff to come together amidst layoff announcements
322 – goals were to offer a community-focused space to talk with colleagues across the
323 university and share emotions. We had a little over 50 staff attendees join and participate
324 in both large group discussions and breakout rooms.
- 325 a) Common concerns were the impact of reductions, workload, and
326 grief/anxiety/worry/frustration. Lingering questions were around accountability from
327 the University, who was terminated, the possibility of more layoffs, and the role of SC
328 in helping with this moving forward (e.g., is there something SC can do preemptively

- 329 if more layoffs are coming the future?).
- 330 a) Many left feeling connected, supported, and in community; we'll be looking at
- 331 feedback to help figure out the best ways to host more of these kinds of events going
- 332 forward.
- 333 ii. Huge thank you to everyone for their time and effort in helping to put this event together!
- 334 iii. *Comment:* It was very cathartic to make connections with other staff across the school in
- 335 such a trying time!
- 336 a) *Reply:* This was exactly what we were hoping people would get out of the event and
- 337 hope to bring this type of engagement to SC as well.
- 338 b. Updates from our January Staff Council retreat
- 339 i. 4-hour in-person retreat on 1/21 – goals were to acknowledge recent changes, create
- 340 space for SC members to reflect on how we're feeling, and surface themes that can inform
- 341 SC priorities; this was primarily a reflective retreat.
- 342 ii. Overarching themes that came out of the retreat for continued consideration were strongly
- 343 connected to SC's purpose of advocating for staff but uncertainties on what issues are
- 344 deeply felt by staff and can be acted upon, the feeling that SC is more of an advisory
- 345 group/conduit.
- 346 iii. Next steps – revisiting committee goals in light of reduced SC membership due to
- 347 departures and layoffs; reconsidering meeting structure to increase participation and
- 348 engagement opportunities for staff at large; develop more equitable and collaborative
- 349 working structure for SC members.
- 350 a) We're actively talking about meeting structure changes and will likely move forward
- 351 with some of these changes for next academic year.

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353 9. Meeting adjourned at 3:47pm, Erin K seconded.

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355 Agenda categories are defined as:

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357 **Update** – an informational presentation to Council

358 **Q&A** – an informational presentation to Council plus question-and-answer session with presenter

359 **Discussion** -- a presentation to Council soliciting feedback

360 **Vote** – item that requires a Council vote