



KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Staff Council

Agenda
Staff Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, March 10, 2026
2:00-3:00 p.m.
In-Person
Schwebel Room, 3rd Floor, Kent Student Center (Kent Campus)

Welcome (Crystal)

Guest: Kent State University President Todd Diacon

Approval of Minutes for February 10, 2026 Staff Council General Meeting (Craig)

- Handout: [February 10, 2026 Minutes](#)

2026-2027 Staff Council Executive Board Goals and Charge to Committees (Crystal)

- Committee Goals and Anticipated Expenditure(s) of Funds
- Complete [survey regarding Future Meeting Suggestions](#)
- Don't forget to complete [Committee Reporting Form](#) following each committee meeting

Committee Reports (Crystal)

- Committee Reports, Goals, and Anticipated Expenditure(s) of Funds
 - Advocacy Committee (Stephanie & Erin)
 - Bylaws & Elections Committee (Shaunte)
 - Communications Committee (Madison & Melissa)
 - Finance Committee (Nikki)
 - Membership Committee (Nikki & Aimee)
- Reminders:
 - Complete [survey regarding Future Meeting Suggestions](#)

Adjournment



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**Minutes
Staff Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, March 10, 2026
2:00-3:00 p.m.
In-Person**

Schwebel Room, 3rd Floor, Kent Student Center (Kent Campus)

Attendance:

Present: Kara Barnett, Craig Berger, Erin Beseda, Zach Boggs, Matt Cola, Matthew Craver, Patti Davis, Stephanie Evans, Sally Fadorsen, Carmen Grubbs, Melissa Halozan, Crystal Hamon, Aimee Johnson, Cheryl Kanis, Jaclyn Macomber, Katie Mattise, Darcy McBride, Nikki Mills, Monica Morson, Phillip Nelson, Barbara Ozimek, Jennifer Richmond, Shaunte Rouse, Jennelizabeth Sepulveda, Megan Smeznik, Heather Stupecki, Jen Villanueva, Tiffany Williams, Judy Yasenosky

Absent: Melissa Halozan (excused), Madison Massey (excused); Phillip Nelson (excused); Cassie Pegg-Kirby (excused)

Welcome (Crystal)

- Meeting called to order at 2:02 p.m.
- Introduction of President Todd Diacon
- Community Agreement referenced (placed on tables) to guide discussion
- Framing the conversation as informal and conversational
- Round of introductions

Guest: Kent State University President Todd Diacon

Question: Looking ahead to the next five years, what two or three institutional priorities do you believe will most shape Kent State's future?

President Diacon identified three primary priorities shaping Kent State's future:

- **Save (Reduce Expenditures)**
 - Anticipated need to reduce approximately \$18–19 million (approximately 5%)
 - Fiscal Year 2027 expected to be particularly challenging
- **Increase Efficiency**



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- Continued reduction in workforce primarily through attrition, with minimal involuntary departures
- Commitment to treating remaining employees well despite reduced staffing levels
- **Invest in Revenue-Generating Areas**
 - Example: Partnership with BioMed leasing space in the Michael Schwartz Center, generating approximately \$800,000 annually in cost avoidance.
 - Continued investment in areas such as:
 - College of Aeronautics & Engineering
 - Sciences and emerging fields
 - Emphasis on identifying new ways to generate enrollment and revenue

President Diacon offered some context for the current budgetary challenges:

- Demographic shifts
- Changes in State Share of Instruction (SSI) funding formulas
- Inflation
- Significant decline in international students (roughly 36–40% drop in visas issued)

This financial and operational environment is expected to persist for at least 3–4 years

Question: From your perspective, how can Staff Council best support you and the broader goals of the University

- Be well-informed employees and help colleagues stay informed
 - Read budget communications
 - Engage with “Talking with Todd” updates
- President Diacon emphasized that understanding how the university operates leads to more productive, solution-oriented conversations
- Clarified that he is not seeking agreement, but rather informed dialogue
- Noted how misconceptions can spread easily (e.g., misunderstanding of decisions regarding identity centers)

Question: What kinds of feedback from staff have most influenced your decision-making since becoming President?

- **Free Lunch Program**



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- Originally implemented based on staff feedback
- Discontinued due to cost (approximately \$250,000 each semester), though valued for building community
- **Tuition Remission**
 - Strong staff priority
 - No plans to eliminate the benefit
 - Potential for a sliding scale adjustment, though most employees would likely retain full benefit
- Emphasized effort to remain a strong employer despite financial constraints

Question: Where do you see untapped potential among Kent State staff and how might the university and Staff Council better support or develop that potential?

President Diacon invited staff to identify areas of opportunity. Discussion included:

- **Promotion Pathways Based on Experience**
 - Example raised: Sally Fedorsen has been a long-term employee (27 years) without having been promoted due to prioritizing family
 - President Diacon responded that it's difficult for him to draw conclusions from one-off examples like this
 - A suggestion emerged from Patti Davis to explore equivalencies between years of experience and degree requirements in job descriptions
 - Potential collaboration with Human Resources and Division of People, Culture, and Belonging (PCB)
- **Professional Development & Growth**
 - Desire for expanded access to professional development and reflection spaces from Shaunte Rouse
 - Interest in making development a cultural norm across campus
 - Dr. Gooden mentioned upcoming Staff Professional Development Institute initiative
 - President Diacon encouraged everyone to utilize existing resources made available by the University (e.g., LinkedIn Learning)
- **Mentorship & Career Pathing**
 - Shaunte Rouse also identified gap in mentorship opportunities for staff
 - Need for more structured support systems
- **Onboarding Experience**
 - Feedback from Matthew Cola that onboarding processes can feel overwhelming



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- Opportunity for Staff Council to support improvements
- **Organizational Collaboration**
 - President Diacon recognized that an initiative like T28 was highly collaborative and produced stronger outcomes as a result
 - He noted the importance of building relationships with Vice Presidents and leadership to strengthen staff's contributions to the university
- **Employee Experience & Campus Navigation**
 - President Diacon noted concern with visitor and employee experience, including poor signage
 - Encouraged staff to consider: *"How does the university look to those experiencing it for the first time?"*

Question: What would you like staff to understand about your leadership philosophy that may not always be visible in day-to-day decisions?

- Strives not to micromanage; delegates operational decision-making to Vice Presidents
- Views the President's role as strategic rather than day-to-day managerial
- Describes himself as trusting and sometimes slow to identify personnel issues
- Expressed difficulty with individuals who take themselves too seriously, emphasizing humility in leadership

Question: What is one difficult decision or trade-off you believe universities like Kent State will need to make in the coming years to remain strong and sustainable?

- The current structure of higher education (largely shaped in the 1960s–1970s) is undergoing significant transformation
- Academic structures and disciplines have evolved before and will continue to do so
- Anticipates continued structural change over the next decade
- Acknowledged that change is difficult, but necessary
- Emphasized uncertainty: *"We don't yet know exactly what it will become."*

Additional Question to President Diacon from Matthew Craver: Given your background as an historian, how can we best conserve/protect/honor the University's history during a time when programs like Africana Studies are being discontinued?

- Africana Studies major was discontinued due to state law, not institutional decision
- Identity centers were also closed due to legislative mandates



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- President Diacon noted lack of clarity from policymakers on why long-standing programs were eliminated
- Student organizations remain permitted to continue related work
- The university can still honor and preserve its history
- Acknowledged that this shift places additional responsibility on students, and the institution is still adapting

Dr. Gooden's Remarks

- Acknowledged ongoing concerns about staff promotion pathways
- Highlighted upcoming initiatives, including a Professional Development Institute
- Encouraged staff to engage with People, Culture, and Belonging (PCB) for support
- Recognized the creativity and adaptability of faculty and staff during challenging times

Closing Reflections from President Diacon

- Emphasized importance of recognizing diverse perspectives within the university community
- Encouraged creating space for respectful disagreement
- Reiterated: *"I am the President of all of Kent State."*
- Noted that the institution—and higher education broadly—will look very different in 10 years

Approval of Minutes from February 10, 2026

- Motion to approve: Matthew Craver
- Second: Aimee Johnson
- Approved unanimously

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m.