

Kent State University Staff Council Meeting

November 18, 2025

Teams Meeting

The meeting began at 2:00 pm. In attendance: Kara Barnett, Meagan Blake, Craig Berger, Erin Beseda, Heidi Covan, Paul Creed III, Anita Francisco, Melissa Halozan, Crystal Hamon, Aimee Johnson, Keturah Kneuss, Alice Kopunovitz, Jaclyn Macomber, Katie Mattise, Nikki Mills, Monica Morson, Phillip Nelson, Barbara Ozimek, Maegan Richards, Ruth Pittman, Shaunte Rouse, Rachel Rundo, Megan Smeznik, Jen Villanueva, Tiffany Williams, Virginia Wright, Judith Yasenosky.

Guests: Amoaba Gooden, Melody Tankersley

Welcome and Announcements-Alice Kopunovitz

Alice welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced guest Melody Tankersley, Executive Vice President and Provost

Dr. Tankersley stated that she appreciated being at the Staff Council meeting. She also thanked staff for everything we do for Kent State University, the community and our students. She stated that the T28 staffing changes have happened, there is a lot going on at Kent State University and all around us. She noted that since Staff Council has a lot of questions, she would like to proceed with questions.

Question: Remote work is important to staff morale and wellness. We've heard from staff that certain colleges have recently rescinded staff's ability to work remotely. Are there ways you can see us working together to address this and allow those staff to access the remote work policy again?

Answer: Remote work comes up regularly with staff. It is important to be flexible, have more opportunities, and maintain a work life balance that works for employees and students. The policy is coming from a place where we want to do our best for the wellbeing of the community. The role of staff is vital. Staff are the first point of contact. The University has had reductions. We are in struggling times, we are streamlining offices, and we need to be open, welcome and inviting to the University community. It is crucial to serving the community for staff to be in the office. Staff should have a conversation with their supervisor to see how this would work to meet the needs of students and our colleagues. Supervisors may have ideas. It is important to get work done and determine how we go forward considering all of this.

Question: With "doing work differently," how can we collaborate to support staff in managing faculty expectations around workload and capacity? For example, connect with chairs and directors to manage faculty expectations of reduced staff.

Answer: As we navigate staffing changes, how do we manage and streamline tasks? This is going to look different in different departments. Having those conversations is important. How can we have staff actively contributing to this? Updates with your supervisor on how to help be a catalyst for change. How can supervisors work with you? She is comfortable asking Chairs and Directors to have that conversation with their staff. Staff need to be straightforward with tasks and help supervisors set boundaries. She will reiterate this to ensure supervisors are creating that space for staff. Supervisors don't know everything. How can staff help supervisors understand? KSU wants to streamline tasks and processes. How do we use technology to support supervisors in getting things done, and which tasks can take a back seat? This is an opportunity to lean into collaborations.

Question: As people are shifting roles and doing tasks or taking on multiple roles, how is the University supporting supervisors, faculty and people working through this transition to have the collaborative skills, time, providing space and skillsets?

Answer: KSU will continue to be managing in the future and with this transitional space. Things change. We need to be intentional and strategic in creating an inclusive environment and rely on People Culture and Belonging to guide those conversations. Chairs and directors need to be creating a purposeful plan and mentorship for people who are taking on

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new roles and new space. Amoaba Gooden noted that conversations with supervisors may be difficult, and staff are finding their voice. She suggested consulting with another staff member to review the conversation first. Melody Tankersley acknowledged that it is so helpful to take in that feedback. Amoaba Gooden offered that Donna Sansonetti and Betsy McCafferty are having conversations with deans and trying to work with them and have a partnership of empathy and care. Melody noted that she appreciates Amoaba's leadership and heart.

Question: What are ways Staff Council can work with people who are transitioning to provide support?

Answer: Dr. Tankersley noted that any kind of change can be scary and change can also be exciting. Suddenly you are doing something new and previously you were comfortable in your job. She recalled her first task as Provost was to work with course scheduling. She brought together the Registrar's office and scheduling people to receive lots of feedback. She feels that we need to do more collaborative work like this on campus. What tasks can we work together and do differently? You now have a team around you who can support you to accomplish more tasks and make it work together.

Amoaba Gooden shared link to recent article from The Chronicle of Higher Education in the chat:
https://www.chronicle.com/article/anxiety-and-exhaustion-stalk-those-spared-from-layoffs?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_15729536_nl_Academe-Today_date_20251118

Question: How can Staff Council keep abreast of different issues facing staff in academic units specifically at the University? And what are the best ways to share with you any concerns or possible solutions related to these issues?

Answer: She thinks we are on a good trajectory by keeping the lines of communication going. You will have to let us know what is going on. We have some things that are coming up where they will need to have information about what they can do to support us. We need to continue to gather people together and make time for each other. Some colleges have regular staff meetings with the dean to ask questions and report together as a unit.

Minutes-Virginia Wright

- Virginia shouted out a thank you to Megan Smeznik for preparing the October meeting minutes. Virginia called for a motion to approve the October 14, 2025, meeting minutes. Heidi Covan made a motion, and Alice Kopunovitz seconded the motion.

Committee Reports

- **E-Board-Alice Kopunovitz**
 - Comments and questions for leadership from the staff council email as well as comments from the wellness fairs were passed along to the Advocacy Committee for their consideration and follow-up.
 - Next month Eboni Pringle and Sean Broghammer will be attending General meeting
 - Alice will send Teams invitation in December for a gathering at Belle Tower Brewing Co.
 - Alice thanked everyone for their hard work during this challenging year
- **Communications Committee-Ruth Pittman**
 - Committee met and made updates to website
 - Application link on Staff Council website has been closed
 - Plan to meet again next month
 - Committee plans to make a Q and A for transition to new committee members to keep momentum going

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- **Finance Committee – Nikki Mills**
 - Nothing to report. The committee did not meet due to meeting with President Diacon
 - Mileage requests were submitted for approval 2 weeks ago and they are still waiting for response
- **Membership/Activities/Professional Development Committee-Aimee Johnson**
 - Committee held a forum last week where 18 applicants attended.
 - They will keep the PowerPoint going so that they don't have to rebuild from scratch
 - Plan to meet December 1
- **Advocacy Committee-Erin Beseda**
 - Committee has not met. It has been two months since last meeting
- **Elections & Bylaws Review Committee-Shaunte Rouse**
 - Bylaws finished, approved and sent to Executive Board. Ruth Pittman noted that the updated Bylaws would need to be on the website. Alice Kopunovitz stated that the Bylaws were sent to Amoaba Gooden and she would follow up on the status and let us know if approved to post on website.
 - Executive Board Election process was posted in Teams on 9/24 with encouragement and reminders in November.
 - There was discussion about the nomination process among staff council members, and there were several requests to reopen the applications. Shaunte voiced concerns that she is not ok with making changes that could cause a lot of extra work for the committee, may delay the Executive Board from serving until February, and she thinks the new board would probably want to start in January. There was also discussion of extending process to January to allow new members to serve. Judy Yasenovsky made a motion to extend the deadline to the end of November and to hold the election in December. Paul Creed III seconded the motion. Shaunte will reopen the applications until the end of November. Members who are interested in serving should apply by the deadline.
 - Shaunte clarified that members who want to apply for multiple positions need to apply for each position. She also noted that members applying must complete the application. If a member wants to nominate another member, contact that person directly to request their consideration of filling out an application to serve on the Executive Board.
 - Shaunte reposted the Staff Council Executive Board Candidate Application in the chat:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Sm-g5cQeAU2Pc-fdFfJhNN-hYGyClSNAspziNCZWV85UMDFUUEY0NTI0M0tQNVZETTY4UzExRkdVNy4u>
 - Next general meeting (December 16) will be extended 30 minutes

Meeting Adjourned at 3:19 pm