

WSPH Staff Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 11:30 AM

Present: Nichole Valenzuela; Brendan Carter; Michael Fox; Libby Favrot; Phillip Williams; Connor Livingston; Emma Powers; Cassieta Trawick; Cristina Miller; Aisha Williams; Kathy Carneiro; Susan Barrera; Tom Augustson; Janel Fielding; Amy Carreras.

1. Call to Order

Chair called the meeting to order and noted prior minutes approval process is being clarified (minutes approval status for the previous meeting was not confirmed during this meeting).

2. Old Business

2.1 Souper Bowl Competition – Results Recap

Chair announced the winners from the food pantry competition:

1. **11 on the Field — 706 points**
2. **SBPS Superstars — 302 points**
3. **Ya Heard Immunity— 225 points**
4. **Weatherhead Hurricanes— 159 points**

Notes:

- This was described as the **2nd annual Souper Bowl challenge**, and the **3rd food pantry competition overall** (including a back-to-school drive).
- Appreciation was extended to all teams for participation and contributions to the student pantry.

2.2 Fireside Chat with the Dean – Date Confirmed

- Date/time confirmed: **Tuesday, March 24, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM**, with intent to wrap by **11:45 AM**.
- Chair will send “Save the Date” communications.

2.3 WSPH Flexible Work Arrangement Guidelines – Summary

Chair summarized new WSPH flexible work arrangement guidance (aligned to university policy). Key points discussed:

- Intended for **consistent** flexible arrangements (not one-off days).
- Process: **Supervisor approval** → **request form** → **Chair review** → **Tom review with Dean** → **approval/implementation**.

- Eligibility: must be **past introductory period** and **not on a performance improvement plan**.
- Operational needs take precedence; arrangements require maintaining **availability, responsiveness, productivity**.
- Must attend required in-person activities and adjust schedules if operational demands require.
- Failure to meet expectations may result in arrangement being revoked.

Tom Augustson emphasized the need for institutional awareness/consistency, with operations and student support prioritized.

3. New Staff Council Business

3.1 King Cake & Mardi Gras Throws Event

- Scheduled: **Tuesday, February 10, 2:00–3:30 PM**
- Notes: multiple king cakes planned (discussion ranged around ~8–10).
- A new **Muses shoe** (blue/green) and other throws have been secured; thank-you cards will be signed and delivered to donors/supporters.

Volunteer needs:

- **Setup support at ~1:30 PM** in Diboll (as available).
- Volunteers to help **hand out raffle tickets** and assist during the event.

3.2 Staff Star Nominations (Upcoming)

- Nominations expected to open soon (timed around Fireside Chat programming).
- Plan to promote nominations at the Feb 10 event; potential **QR code** to facilitate submissions.
- Form status to be confirmed (who updated it and whether the latest version is ready).

3.3 Staff Topics/Questions for the Dean – Submission Form

- A separate form will be distributed for staff to submit **topics/questions** for the Dean.
- Goal: collect submissions **at least 1–2 weeks** prior to the Fireside Chat so Chair can review themes with the Dean.

3.4 SBPS Representative Vacancy

- SBPS seat open due to **Carrie Moulder** departing Tulane University

3.5 Spring Elections / Leadership Planning

- Chair encouraged members to consider running for officer roles, particularly **Vice Chair** for the next cycle.

- Chair noted need to determine which department reps are rolling off; follow-up planned with Phillip.

3.6 Staff Night Out with the Dean (Bowling)

- Discussed as a key spring staff engagement item.
- Chair will seek quotes now that Fireside Chat date is locked; venue possibility mentioned (e.g., Fulton Alley).

4. Committee Updates

4.1 Retreat Committee (Janel Fielding / Brendan Carter)

- Committee meeting scheduled **Monday at 10:00 AM**; open invite for additional members.
- Focus: review what worked previously and plan for next retreat (space/topics).

4.2 Community Service / Outreach (Open Seat)

- Position remains open; discussion emphasized increasing engagement by selecting causes meaningful to staff.
- Proposed idea: a **summer-focused drive** (e.g., hygiene items/clothing/summer needs).
- Suggestion to collect ideas via **QR/suggestion box**, possibly at events and/or Fireside Chat.
- Alisha Williams volunteered to support committee leadership (with shared input from council)

4.3 Health & Wellness (Nichole Valenzuela)

- No new event update; prior “Palentines” idea paused while exploring staff lounge concept.
- Chair submitted a **staff lounge proposal** with quotes; a meeting is needed to review next steps.

4.4 Staff Appreciation (Libby Favrot)

- No additional update beyond King Cake/Mardi Gras event planning.

4.5 Staff Concerns (Farhana Chaudhry)

- No report-out during this meeting.

5. Reports

5.1 Executive Faculty Meeting (Tom Augustson)

- Summary included: controller guidance; Waveworks updates; upcoming family meeting (noted as next week); training expectations and system transition impacts.

5.2 Staff Advisory Council (Phillip Williams)

- Report included discussion of benefits/facilities topics:
 - Evaluation of certain benefits (e.g., program participation reviews, dental coverage evaluation).
 - Uptown policy discussion re: **e-bike ban** due to battery fire risk; policy being revisited for mobility impacts.
 - Downtown redevelopment discussion: Central Charity timeline clarification (3-year clock begins at construction start), projected growth in downtown staffing/faculty over time, civic engagement space concepts.

5.3 Academic Standards (Susan Cantrell)

- No report-out provided during this meeting.

6. HR Announcements / Major Administrative Updates

Highlights discussed:

- Waveworks cutover briefing: **Thu, Feb 5, 2:00–3:00 PM (Zoom)** (registration via HR newsletter).
- Annual performance review: deadline **Fri, Feb 27, 2026**.
- W-2 availability: end of January via ADP.
- Waveworks go-live targets: **Fri, Mar 20, 2026 (HR)** and **Mon, Apr 13, 2026 (Finance)**.
- Competency framework sessions announced (manager + employee sessions in Feb/March).
- Reminder: submit **future time-off entries before freeze** if needed.
- P-Card limit increases should be requested early if needed during freeze.
- Title/job architecture changes: departments may propose “business titles,” but system titles may appear differently; concern raised about employment verification consistency—plan to confirm Q&A guidance with HR.
- Endymion viewing from Tidewater not proceeding this year due to event/security/facilities cost escalation and budget prioritization.

7. Recap of Action Items

1. **Chair/Secretary:** Confirm minutes approval workflow for prior meeting.
2. **Chair:** Send **Save-the-Date** for Fireside Chat with the Dean (**Mar 24, 10–12; aim 11:45 wrap**).
3. **All Council Members:** Promote and support **King Cake & Mardi Gras Throws** event (**Feb 10, 2–3:30**); recruit volunteers for **1:30 setup** and raffle ticket support.

4. **Chair/Libby:** Confirm Staff Star nominations form readiness; prepare **QR code** for submissions; begin promo post–Mardi Gras and/or at Feb 10 event.
5. **Chair:** Launch staff **Dean topics/questions** form; target collection 1–2 weeks before Fireside Chat.
6. **Phillip + Chair:** Determine which department reps are rolling off and timeline for spring elections.
7. **Janel/Brendan:** Hold retreat committee meeting Monday 10 AM; invite additional participants.
8. **Community Outreach (Aisha + Council):** Develop outreach idea intake (suggestion box/QR) and propose summer drive concept.

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned after final announcements and action item recap.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 5th, 2026, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm