

Tulane SPHTM Staff Council

Meeting Minutes

January 15, 2026

Present: Cristina Miller, Phillip Williams, Libby Favrot, Janel Fielding, Helina Shiferaw (filling in for Connor Livingston), Emma Powers, Kathy Carneiro, Brendan Carter, Michael Fox, Farhana Chaudhry, Cassieta Trawick, Tom Augustson, Daniella Fontana Bermudez, Susan Barrera, Helina Shiferaw

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chair. General welcome back for the spring semester.

3. Old Business

Fireside Chat

The previously discussed Fireside Chat date (March 25th) is now in question due to conflicts. Tulane “Green Wave of Service” is expected to occur on March 25 (not yet officially announced during the meeting). As a result, Fireside Chat rescheduling is pending availability. Staff Night Out with the Dean is also on hold, as the intent was to align it with the Fireside Chat timing. “Staff Star” award timing/launch is delayed until Fireside Chat scheduling is clarified.

Ugly Sweater Social Debrief

- Positive feedback shared; turnout and flow were strong.
- The “kitchen table” setup and group conversation format were highlighted as successes.
- Some ornament-making supplies remain and could reduce costs if repeated next year.

Flexible Work Arrangement / Policy Messaging (SAC-related discussion)

- The group acknowledged progress from the recent communication but noted it was not the full resolution desired.
- Concerns raised:
 - Messaging implied staff advisory involvement in policy development more than was accurate (felt “disingenuous” by some).
 - Restricting remote days to Tue–Thu was criticized as misaligned with student presence patterns and as signaling mistrust of staff.
 - Approval chain being pushed to the Dean-level broadly was described as impractical; preference expressed for supervisor/supervisor’s supervisor discretion.
- Updates mentioned:
 - President Michael A. Fitts expected to attend an upcoming Staff Advisory Council meeting; hope to surface the issue there.
 - A meeting occurred with HR (Julio) reinforcing that Dean-level approvals are being used, with the Dean’s office drafting internal directions for dissemination.

New Staff Council Business

Super Bowl Competition (Food Pantry Drive)

- Donation drive begins Tuesday, Jan 20 and ends Monday, Feb 2; totals to be finalized on Feb 3.
- Winner announcement + “tailgate” gathering: Wednesday, Feb 4, 3–4 PM at Diboll Gallery.
- Returning champion referenced (“Canned Beans 19”).
- Strategy notes shared:
 - Double-point/high-need items: canned tuna, canned chickpeas, white rice.
 - An approved items list and an Amazon wishlist link were shared previously; any brand acceptable as long as items match pantry ordering categories.
- Reminder: pantry distribution works like “online shopping” by students; random pantry clean-outs are discouraged.

Staff Mini-Closet Reminder

- In addition to pantry food, there is a clothing/needs component (especially helpful for international students).
- Members encouraged to donate useful items (not junk), including winter-type items and hand warmers.

Spring Events

- Discussion of reviving a Mardi Gras/King Cake + throws activity (noting value for new-to-NOLA staff).
- Timing constraint noted: likely the week of Feb 9 (before Mardi Gras).
- Libby and Cassieta indicated willingness to coordinate if scoped to a short window; some members offered throw donations.

Committee & Report Updates

Staff Council Committees

- *Retreat*: planning items include speaker engagement and venue booking; survey to be resent
- *Community Service/Outreach*: open seat remains.
- *Health & Wellness*: meeting scheduled for 2 PM (same day) to continue staff lounge work.
- *Staff Appreciation*: continuing work on birthday and anniversary recognition; question raised about using a shared Staff Council sending address (resource account access process discussed).
- *Staff Concerns*: no update; meeting needed (prior attempt didn’t yield a quorum time).

Executive Faculty / Staff Advisory / Academic Standards Reports

No major new updates reported beyond items discussed in Old Business.

HR Announcements

- Annual performance review webinars: next live session Thu, Feb 5, 10–11 AM (registration via newsletter).
- Performance evaluation completion deadline: Fri, Feb 27, 2026.
- Payroll transition effective Jan 19, 2026 from HR to Finance as part of WayForward / Oracle Cloud HCM implementation (no expected disruption)

- Tuition waiver application deadline for Spring 2026: Jan 23
- Willow School priority application deadline: Jan 23,2025
- W-2 forms available end of January via ADP email.
- Floating holiday reminder: use by June 30 with supervisor approval.

Action Items Recap

1. Fireside Chat / Staff Night Out / Staff Star: Chair to confirm Dean availability.
2. Super Bowl Competition: Promote Jan 20–Feb 2 drive; prep for Feb 4 tailgate + winner announcement.
3. Resource Inventory Draft: Create a building “resource inventory” (what floors already have) to inform lounge decisions without promising deliverables.
4. Mardi Gras Event: Scope and coordinate a feasible Mardi Gras/King Cake + throws activity (likely week of Feb 9).
5. Retreat Planning: Re-issue retreat survey and start spring/fall planning earlier (speaker + facility booking).
6. Staff Council Comms: Explore access to shared Staff Council sending account for appreciation announcements and begin process for email/handle transition away from “SPHTM” branding (IT coordination, forwarding plan).

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned after final questions and reminders.

Next meeting: February 5, 2026