

**Tulane WSPH Staff Council
Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2025**

Present: Tom Augustson, Ben Bratcher, Brendan Carter, Cassieta Trawick, Julio Diaz, Daniella Fontana Bermudez, Michael Fox, Akilesh Kandregula, Carrie Moulder, Emma Powers, Elizabeth Tierney, Nichole Valenzuela, Phillip Williams, Caleb Wilson, Janel Fielding, Shelby Olin, Shelby Ruiz, Marjola Hotchkiss, Alisha Williams, Avery Peterson, Kathy Carneiro, Cristina Miller, Janel Fielding

Call to Order: 11:30 a.m.

1. Introductions

New and continuing members participated in introductions sharing their name, role, department, favorite lunch spot, and personal theme song for the week. Chair Valenzuela welcomed newly elected representatives and thanked outgoing members for their service.

2. Bylaws Review

Chair Valenzuela reviewed the WSPH Staff Council bylaws, highlighting the mission to represent and advocate for staff needs while serving as a communication conduit between staff and administration. Key updates included changing school abbreviation from SPHTM to WSPH throughout the bylaws.

Mission Statement: To represent and advocate for the needs of staff at WSPH and serve as a conduit for communication and information exchange between staff and school administration on existing and proposed policies, procedures, and programs.

Meeting Structure: Monthly meetings held first Thursday of each month, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM, open to all staff employees.

3. Officer Elections

Positions and Duties Reviewed:

- **Chair:** Announces agendas, presides over meetings, serves as WSPH Staff Council representative on Executive Committee (requires 1+ year Staff Council experience)
- **Vice Chair:** Acts in Chair's capacity when unavailable, organizes volunteer recruitment, maintains website
- **Secretary:** Writes/distributes meeting minutes, tracks attendance, records election results

Election Results:

- **Chair:** Nichole Valenzuela (re-elected for final eligible term)
- **Vice Chair:** Brendan Carter
- **Secretary:** Akilesh Kandregula

4. Meeting Schedule and SAC Representative

Confirmed: Monthly meetings continue first Thursday of each month, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

SAC Representative: Phillip Williams appointed as Ex Officio SAC representative for Staff Council reporting.

5. Special Session Planning

August 7th Meeting Enhancement: Chair arranged for Emily Harris (facilitator) to conduct one-hour team building session focused on Staff Council goals for the year.

6. Staff Council Committees

Committee sign-up sheet circulated for member participation. Each representative required to join one subcommittee.

a. Retreat (Janel Fielding, Brendan Carter):

- Date: Friday, October 3rd, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
- Location: Pending (considering venues or Wave City Market atrium area)
- Speakers confirmed: Javier (morning collaboration/team building), Hannah (afternoon leadership/departments team building)
- Nichole coordinating trivia competition
- Seeking food coordination volunteers and swag ideas

b. Community Service and Outreach (Carrie Moulder):

- Planning clothing drive for student workwear (partnering with Student Experience)
- Thanksgiving take-home meal packages for students
- Policy education sessions on advocacy compliance for Tulane employees
- Upcoming toiletries collection for IOC House of Louisiana (addiction treatment center) - Collection date: August 8th
- Bias training for staff: July 30th, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM
- Bead bin for art supplies recently emptied and delivered (thanks to volunteers Stacy Herb and David Mora)

c. Health and Wellness (Nichole Valenzuela):

- Spot Scrim Summer Challenge completed
- Winner announced: "The Great Escapers" team (Shallene, Joseph, and Dr. Erica Valenzuela) visited all 7 Canal Street art installations

d. Staff Appreciation (Phillip Williams - transitioning out):

- Recent snowball event conducted
- Wave of Difference Award: June winner - Avery Peterson Smith; July winner to be announced
- Chair position open for August, seeking new leadership

e. Staff Concerns:

- Focus on return to office policy feedback and response
- Working on formal letter to administration regarding policy concerns
- Meeting schedule: 3rd Tuesday monthly
- Letter will be circulated to all staff for review and signatures before submission

7. HR Announcements (Julio Diaz)

- **Tech Talks:** 45-minute virtual/hybrid sessions on technology skills and productivity tools (Excel, Adobe, Box, etc.) - recordings available on website
- **Flexible Work Arrangement Policy:** Updated policy effective August 11th - exception process available
- **Talent Acquisition:** New tools and team members added, hiring manager webinar July 16th
- **Tuition Exchange Scholarship:** Webinar for 2026-2027 academic year announced in newsletter
- **LinkedIn Learning Library:** Free benefit reminder for all employees
- **Floating Holiday:** New fiscal year provides new floating holiday for benefit-eligible staff (use by June 30, 2026)

8. Other Business

Staff requested email distribution of flexible work arrangement forms to supervisors for easier access.

9. Action Items Recap

- **Nichole Valenzuela:** Schedule Emily Harris for August 7th team building session; update committee descriptions; distribute committee sign-up results to chairs
- **Julio Diaz:** Investigate email distribution of flexible work arrangement forms; send HR update links to Chair for distribution
- **Staff Retreat Committee:** Finalize venue and costs; recruit food coordination volunteers
- **Community Service Committee:** Send toiletries collection information; coordinate bias training registration; schedule Government Affairs education session
- **Staff Concerns Committee:** Finalize and distribute return-to-office policy response letter; continue monitoring policy implementation
- **All Representatives:** Complete committee sign-up sheet; communicate meeting information to departments; block August 7th meeting time

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 PM.

Next Meeting:

August 7, 2025, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM (with Emily Harris team building session)