



THE UNIVERSITY *of* NEW ORLEANS

STAFF COUNCIL

Thursday, April 18, 2024. In Person.

Approval of Minutes

Announcement: Sheila Judge, Director of Accessibility and Inclusion

New name for the office, disability services office. Accountability is now somewhere else, and our office can now just focus on accessibility. We want to focus on possibilities and positives vs the negative focus.

Sheila is a UNO graduate - former student govt president, and is thrilled to be back

Accessibility focuses on everyone:

Those with visible issues like a wheelchair or prosthetic, but also those who have an invisible disability. We must be considerate for all abilities - whether their needs are visible or not.

Making some change on campus:

Not just being aware of students or people - everyone needs to be aware of the issues so we can all make change

Create the space for people to who they are (classrooms and public spaces)

Provided equal access to space

More than physical access - also digital spaces (alt text, describe things,

Want everyone to bring their best selves

All are responsible - not just the accessibility office, not just IT. Challenge yourself to be more considerate and inclusive and be a part of the transformative change

Campus community

Physical access on campus -

Ensuring the campus is accessible physically

le; someone came for a campus tour in a wheel chair, there was a problem with the liberal arts building and the the person in the wheel chair had to be physically picked up and moved. This puts a negative perspective and that person sees barriers.

Please let the accessibility office knows about physical issues so we can notify students

Digital space - use alt text, describe pictures, don't include charts that are just pictures because someone who is blind won't get that information

Laws that impact us: ADA, ADAA, Section 504, Section 508, WCAG - we need to protect ourselves from lawsuits but also because it's the right thing to do

Following the accommodations

Different types of accommodations - we might need to tweak things to personalize it to the students

Person first language and focus on access

Referring students - don't assume they've registered or know about our office. They have the right to not register, of course, but it should be their choice

Accommodations are not automatic

We must be aware that some students might be hesitant, nervous, or have had a negative experience. They might be hesitant to ask for accommodations because of that.

Right shoes philosophy - athletic shoes, dance shoes, heels - what happens if we give someone the wrong pair of shoes, something too big, or too small, can affect their performance. We all need the right shoes!

Campus and offices are accessible

Time to build a ramp or be prepared for a student who comes in a wheel chair is not *after* they arrive.

Universal Design - ex. A levered door handle. For some, a knob or a lever are equally accessible. But for others, a knob is not accessible. Try to think of ways that don't change anything for the abled, but opens the door for those who have an accessibility issue.

Results of empowering

Our students will be more prideful

More self-acceptance

Better self-advocacy

More success in the classroom

More engaged students

More sense of community

Neurodivergence

A term many of the invisible disabilities fall into - OCD, ADHD, Autism,

Comes with many strengths

We all deserve for our differences to be a strength

Executive Committee Reports

President: Edgar Avila Jr – Friends of the library book sale April 18-19 on the 4th floor of the library,

Baseball game – Sunday (04/21) is Military Appreciation Day, Earth day on Monday 04/22, SUCbAUF April 30,

Vice President: Debby Charrier –Workday Update: Every last Thursday, 2-3 LA 236 Town hall - What's changing for faculty and staff

Recording Secretary: Coleen Maidlow –Minutes are posted!

Corresponding Secretary: Julie Landry – Website is up to date

Treasurer: Maggie Sunseri – No Reports

Committee Reports

Events Committee: Service with Jazz: Ashleigh Pelafigue & Michelle Daussin

Staff Concerns/Opportunities/Questions:

Late notice for extreme weather:

1. It is deeply disturbing that UNO did not move to remote operations during a serious weather event until 7:35am. Our new president and provost may not be local to this area but the serious nature of these events are not difficult to grasp. Their lack of empathy and concern for health and safety are a catastrophic failure of leadership and I would like them to address staff council and explain what they will do moving forward to ensure more timely decision making for emergencies. Many employees and students were already on campus (myself included) or if not on campus in route. I know one employee who commutes on public transit who was trapped on campus and unable to get home for hours. I know of one student whose car took on water trying to get home after things were called off. I know of two employees whose homes took on water during the torrential downpours and it is just beginning. Gently is flooding and the 610 has been closed in multiple places. This was a huge mistake and I think they need to acknowledge this error and publicly respond. You can't have a whole strategic plan about "supporting our people" and "thriving students" and have a total and complete disregard for the health and safety of the people on campus.
2. I am disappointed in the delayed response about the severe weather threat today, 4/10/24. Most college campuses decided to close yesterday or switch to virtual to give their faculty/staff and students enough time to prepare. Announcing at 7:35 AM that the campus will switch to virtual is ineffective and inconsiderate of the safety of the faculty/staff and students who were either en route to campus or already there. Fortunately, my supervisor gave our team the option yesterday to telework because she values the safety of our team. I wish the leadership who made the campus-wide decisions about weather alerts valued the safety of the UNO community.
3. The lack of urgency in cancelling classes/work when severe weather is announced.
4. UNO made the announcement to close after people had already left home for the drive into work. Can we switch to remote when the city lets people park on the neutral grounds? It would be safer to provide advance notice rather than have people drive in bad weather.

Answer: Faculty and Staff were Dr. Johnson's great concern and she was in communication with city and government officials regarding the weather. Please be weather aware and if faculty/staff feel unsafe regarding traveling to and from work, please communicate with the manager to make arrangements. Have that open communication with your manager so you can make those decisions.

Use of Sick Leave and clarification about leave and work hours:

1. As mental health awareness rises, is it recognized as legitimate to utilize sick time for mental health days? If so, what are appropriate ways to utilize them?
2. There have been a lot of changes recently in regard to leave and work hours (reallocation of university closure days, the plan to keep the campus open over various breaks and rescinding the summer compressed schedule).

I'd appreciate it if all staff members could receive a clear explanation of the plans for keeping the campus open during campus-wide breaks (for example, if I don't have enough leave to cover the Christmas closure days, will I be forced to work those days? Or would working those periods be entirely voluntary?); and how leave without pay operates when used for university closure days (I've been told in conversation that there are rules around accruing leave/service hours for leave without pay but cannot find any written policy).

Additionally, if there are other policies and rules surrounding leave which are not easily accessible (for example, what happens if I need to take sick leave a day before or after vacation leave?), could they please be explained and published somewhere accessible to all staff? I have not been able to find a clear explanation for leave rules and policies and do not know whether they are set at the campus level or department level.

Thanks!

Answer: The employee handbook is under review, so right now rules are dictated by the employee handbook unless there is an AP that is more recent.

Here is the link to the handbook: <https://www.uno.edu/media/5796/download>

Here is the link to the Flexible Work Hours AP: <https://www.uno.edu/media/1306>

Here is the link to the Leave AP: <https://www.uno.edu/media/1861>

Of note in the Leave AP:

Compensatory Time: Please see page 5-6 for information about the Comp time. You must request comp time in advance in workday. Go to workday – time – overtime request – new request

Sick Leave is leave with pay granted to an employee who is suffering with a disability which prevents the employee from performing their usual duties and responsibilities and who requires medical, dental, or optical consultation or treatment; or to care for an immediate family member who is ill or injured; or to accompany an immediate family member to a medical, dental, or optical consultation or treatment. As used in this subsection, “immediate family member” means a spouse, parent, or child of an employee.

A written certification from a registered physician or other acceptable proof of disability is required for sick leave of five (5) or more consecutive workdays (or less, if deemed appropriate by the department head). An employee may be required to furnish proof of illness if abuse of sick leave is indicated.

Sick leave with pay may be taken by an employee with sufficient leave to their credit for the following:

- a) Illness or injury that prevents performance of their work duties;
- b) Medical, dental, or optical consultation or treatment;
- c) To care for an immediate family member who is ill or injured; or
- d) To accompany an immediate family member to a medical, dental, or optical consultation or treatment.

Old Business

1. **Staff Council Executive Committee elections!** Nominate yourself! We will definitely need a president, but you can nominate yourself for any position. If more than one person applies, we will have an election.