

2025–26 WSPH Staff Council Meeting Minutes

Date: March 5, 2026 | Time: 11:30 AM | Location: Virtual & In person

Called to Order	11:35 AM
Presiding	Brendan Carter (acting in Nicole Valenzuela's absence)

Attendance

Present: Cristina Miller, Libby Favrot, Michael Fox, Daniella Fontana Bermudez, Tom Augustson, Susan Barrera, Phillip Williams, Conner Livingston, Kathy Carneiro, Brendan Carter, Farhana Chaudhry, Jeremy "Jay" Freeman, Akilesh Kandregula, Cassieta Trawick, Alisha Williams, Lisa Paterson, Amy Carreras, Gale Marie Abbas.

1. Call to Order

Brendan Carter called the meeting to order at 11:35 AM and noted that Nicole Valenzuela was out of town. He chaired the meeting in her absence.

2. Opening Item

Alisha Williams requested Staff Council support for a student-led service initiative assembling care packages for the unhoused community during National Public Health Week. The student group's goal is to prepare 300 kits. Williams requested a \$200 contribution from Staff Council in support of the effort.

Motion

A motion was made and seconded for Staff Council to contribute \$200 to the initiative. The motion passed by voice/show-of-hands vote.

3. Old Business

King Cake and Mardi Gras Throws Event

Members agreed the event was successful and well received. The turnout was positive, and attendees enjoyed the opportunity to build community. A coconut-flavored king cake was specifically mentioned as a favorite. Members also noted that unused or undamaged throws may be collected for use in future years. Bead and throw donation bins remain available on the first floor near the back elevator.

Fireside Chat with the Dean

The Fireside Chat with the Dean was confirmed for Tuesday, March 24, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM in Room 1201. A questionnaire is circulating for staff to submit suggested questions for the Dean. The submission deadline is March 11, 2026. Members were asked to share the form widely with staff.

It was also noted that one prior email may have listed the incorrect date. Future communications should confirm and consistently use the March 24 date.

Staff Star Nominations

Staff Star nomination forms are currently circulating. The deadline for submissions is March 11, 2026. Faculty, staff, and students may all submit nominations. Members were encouraged to share the form

broadly, including with students. A suggestion was made to include the announcement in the SBPS newsletter.

Staff Night Out with the Dean

An update was provided on the Staff Night Out with the Dean. The event is planned for Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at Fulton Alley. The anticipated time discussed was 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM, though one calendar reference showed 5:30 PM. The final event time will be reconciled before broad communication. Attendance will be limited and RSVP-based, with available bowling space expected for approximately 25–30 people.

4. New Staff Council Business

Welcome to New SBPS Representative

Jeremy “Jay” Freeman, Program Manager for SBPS, was welcomed as the new representative. Members introduced themselves and invited him to join any Staff Council committees of interest.

Graduation Volunteer Request

Members were reminded that graduation is approaching and that volunteers are needed for Saturday, May 16, 2026. Multiple volunteer shifts will be available throughout the day. Dean Erika Valenzuela is coordinating volunteers. Members were asked to lead by example and encourage participation within their departments. Parking passes will need to be requested in advance for volunteers.

Blood Drive

A blood drive will be held on Friday, March 20, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on the first floor of the Tidewater building. Members were encouraged to share the information with their departments and participate if able.

Nominations and Elections

Upcoming Staff Council nominations and elections were briefly discussed. Akilesh Kandregula agreed to work with Phillip Williams outside the meeting to review the position list and prepare materials before presenting details at a later meeting.

E-Bike Policy Update

Tom Augustson provided an update on the university’s motorized personal vehicle/e-bike policy. A policy issued in October prohibited e-bikes in campus buildings, citing fire and pedestrian safety concerns. Since then, theft incidents involving e-bikes locked outside the building have increased concern about the lack of secure storage options.

The Dean’s office contacted campus safety leadership and was informed that the policy is currently under review and is not being actively enforced at this time. However, questions remain regarding where employees should safely store e-bikes. Possible options discussed included the lot behind the Tidewater building and other secured locations, though no formal solution has been implemented. The issue will continue to be raised through SAC and facilities-related channels.

Master Plan Update Survey

Members were reminded about the Master Plan update survey, due March 6, 2026. The survey was described as somewhat difficult to navigate but important for providing feedback about the downtown campus. Discussion emphasized the need for clearer campus signage, better building identification, safer

and more visible circulation routes, and stronger downtown campus branding. Members were encouraged to complete the survey and send additional suggestions to Tom Augustson for follow-up.

5. HR / WaveWorks Announcements

Susan Barrera provided several HR and WaveWorks updates:

- Staff performance reviews were due the previous Friday. Supervisors must ensure the process is fully completed through all approval and acknowledgment steps.
- W-2 forms are available in ADP. Employees having difficulty locating them should contact HR.
- WaveWorks training is now critical for staff, supervisors, and faculty, particularly those who travel, submit expense reports, approve time, or manage employees.
- All employees will have a basic self-service role in WaveWorks. Supervisors will function as line managers and will be responsible for approving time for direct reports.
- The current HR system is largely frozen ahead of the WaveWorks go-live date of March 20, 2026. During the freeze period, units should rely on P-cards and T&E cards for allowable expenses as needed.
- Any existing travel or expense items incurred before March 11 should be submitted immediately to avoid accounting complications.
- The new Oracle-based performance appraisal process for next year will be more interactive and goal-based, and additional training sessions are expected.
- Floating holidays must be used by June 30.
- LinkedIn Learning remains available for now, though access will eventually shift with Oracle migration.
- Required safety training in Tulane Bridge must be completed by March 10 before the platform transition.

Title Changes and Employment Classifications

Susan Barrera explained that many staff members may see title changes in the new Oracle system as part of the university's broader job architecture project. These changes are intended to standardize titles across the university and do not necessarily reflect a change in pay or job duties. In some cases, employees may also have an approved business-use title for day-to-day purposes. Staff with questions were advised to speak with their supervisors and department administrators and copy HR as needed.

It was also noted that some positions across the university may shift from exempt to non-exempt status. Supervisors should ensure affected employees have been notified and understand any changes.

Timekeeping and Facial Recognition

Questions were raised regarding the new facial recognition option associated with physical time clocks. Susan Barrera clarified that employees who currently use computer-based time entry may continue doing so and are not required to use facial recognition. The new option is primarily intended for employees who clock in physically or work in the field.

6. Committee Updates

Retreat Committee

The Retreat Committee is meeting next week to continue discussing what worked well last year and what improvements should be considered for the next retreat, including location, speakers, and swag. Members with ideas were invited to share them and to join the planning discussions.

Community Service / Outreach

The student unhoused-community kit initiative was the primary outreach update. A blood drive was also announced for March 20, 2026.

Health and Wellness

The committee reported that it is still planning spring programming. Ideas under discussion include a downtown fitness-related activity and a possible end-of-semester or early summer social event. No final plans have been announced yet.

Staff Appreciation

Libby Favrot reported that the committee met briefly before Mardi Gras. Assistance was requested for committee leadership and planning support. Cassieta Trawick offered to help. An update was also provided that work continues on a downstairs staff space; plumbing modifications have already been completed to convert a bathroom area into a sink-only setup.

Staff Concerns

Farhana Chaudhry reported that the committee met and discussed collecting school-level data related to the new flexible work arrangement policy so that the school has evidence available when the policy is reviewed after one year. She and Tom Augustson will coordinate to avoid duplicative efforts.

The committee also plans to launch one more round of mentorship matching before pausing while WaveWorks implementation is underway. Feedback forms will first be sent to participants from the prior round, followed by a new mentorship interest form for staff. Members interested in joining the Staff Concerns Committee were invited to contact Farhana.

7. Reports

Executive Faculty Meeting

Tom Augustson reported on the February 26 Executive Faculty Meeting. Major topics included the school budget, enrollment-related concerns, faculty award nominations, and National Public Health Week planning. Multiple events are being planned for National Public Health Week, including student-centered activities, a Delta Omega poster competition, a crawfish boil, and a misinformation hackathon.

The Dean also sought feedback on the long-term vision for the downtown campus. Suggestions included more green space, stronger campus branding, safer and better-marked corridors, clearer wayfinding signage, and improved building identification for visitors and prospective students. Tom noted that the President appears highly invested in further developing the downtown campus and that visible progress is expected in the coming months, including updates around LaSalle and Tulane.

Staff Advisory Council (SAC)

Phillip Williams reported that SAC recently discussed HR-related issues, including the WaveWorks facial recognition/timekeeping process and the university workstation/mobile device administrative policy. Concerns were raised about the policy language around remote wiping of devices used for work purposes. IT leadership indicated that the policy language may have caused confusion and that the intent relates to data security rather than routine monitoring. SAC will continue to monitor this issue, and members were encouraged to send questions to Phillip before the next SAC meeting on March 26.

8. Additional Announcements

Lisa Paterson announced an upcoming information session regarding the new PSA mechanism for NIH proposals involving international collaborators. The session is tentatively planned for March 19, 2026, from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM. Pre-award managers, department administrators, and investigators working with international partners were encouraged to attend. Supporting materials and checklists are also being developed.

A question was also raised about the annual Day of Service, typically held on March 25. Staff Council leadership will look into whether updated information is available, especially given the overlap with the Staff Night Out with the Dean.

9. Action Items

- Coordinate with Nicole Valenzuela to process the approved \$200 Staff Council contribution for the student unhoused-community kit initiative.
- Share and promote the Fireside Chat question form and Staff Star nomination form before the March 11 deadline.
- Confirm and correct final communications regarding Fireside Chat and Staff Night Out dates/times.
- Encourage department participation in graduation volunteering and the March 20 blood drive.
- Complete and promote the Master Plan update survey before the March 6 deadline.
- Continue monitoring the e-bike policy review and secure-storage discussion through SAC and facilities channels.
- Remind staff and supervisors about pending performance review completion steps, required training, and WaveWorks deadlines.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned after final announcements and reminders.