

UI Staff Council
Wednesday, June 9, 2021
2:30 – 4:30 pm
Online via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

Present

Wendy Askling, Brian Baxter, Damien Blair, Mihaela Bojin, Matsalyn Brown, Brett Cloyd, Jackie Curnick, Em Domingues, Brian Douglas, Jadvyga Gerasimovic, Shari Heick, Cody Howell, Anne Hinkle, Erika Holm-Brown, Makur Jain, James Jorris, Becky Keogh, Jackie Kleppe, Sarah Ling, Heather Mineart, Evans Ochola, Debra O'Connell-Moore, Emmett Oldham, Jamie O'Meara, Stephen Pacha, Carlton Petty, Lisa Piper, Isaac Podolefsky, Ted Potter, Molly Rechkemmer, Rubia Ruiz, Mary Schumaker, Jenny Simpson, Sonia Slevinski, Glenda Smith, Warren Staal, David Stenersen, Jennifer Stout, Erin Turnis, Jim Verry, Jessica Welter, Darrelle Wilkinson, Carrie Whittaker, Toni Woodbury, Kevin Zihlman

Absent

Zach Girazian, Liz Lara, Emily Milke, Jessica Padilla, Yelena Perkhounkova, Jeremy Richardson, Teri Schnelle, Lisa Schumacher, Yashwant Prakash Vyas, Linda Weir Jacobi

Administrative Liaisons

Marla Rosenblum

Guests

Laura Graham (UI Professor), Katie Skorupski (TIAA), Teresa Suchomel, Meena Khandelwal, Amelia Akers, Alysha Ahlf, Jenny Britton, Carolyn Finley, H Pedelty, David Rooney, Hannah Rounds, Vanessa Miller (Gazette)

Presenters - Brock Noel (TIAA), Doug Hertzler (ActionAid), Matthieu Biger, Erin Irish, Brian Finley, Cheryl Reardon

FRIC Charter Committee – Nancy Davin, Cathy Koebrick, John Laverty, Michael Schueller, Angela Speers, Chuck Wieland

WELCOME, ZOOM MEETING PROTOCOL, ATTENDANCE, MEETING MINUTES

Minutes approval:

- May 2021 UISC Minutes: *Em Domingues moved, Heather Mineart seconded; the minutes were approved via Zoom poll.*
- June 2021 SCEC Minutes were provided to councilors prior to the UISC meeting; *there were no questions or comments.*

COUNCILOR INTRODUCTIONS

Returning and new members

Returning UISC members (5) were introduced and include:

- Sonia Slevinski - Research; Scientific Services Function Representative
- Mary Schumaker - Behavioral Health & Health Care Function Representative

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- Lisa Piper - College of Dentistry Organization Representative
- Yelena Perkhounkova - Research; Scientific Services Function Representative
- Jadvyga Gerasimovic - Information Technology Function Representative

New councilors (14) were given an opportunity to introduce themselves. New councilors include:

- Evans Ochola - Academic Support Services and Libraries Function Representative
- Molly Rechkemmer - Academic Support Services and Libraries Function Representative
- Isaac Podolefsky - Administrative, Audit, Compliance, Legal & Risk Management Function Representative
- Jessica Padilla - Administrative, Audit, Compliance, Legal & Risk Management Function Representative
- Brian Baxter - Arts, Athletics, Student Services, Hospitality Function Representative
- David Stenersen - Business and Finance Function Representative
- Cody Howell - Behavioral Health, Health Care Function Representative
- Makur Jain - Information Technology Function Representative
- Warren Staal - Information Technology Function Representative
- Sarah Ling - Information Technology Function Representative
- Darrelle Wilkinson - Research, Scientific Services Function Representative
- Anne Hinkle - Research and Oakdale Campus Organization Representative
- Brett Cloyd - University Libraries Organization Representative
- Liz Lara - Graduate College Organization Representative

Many new councilors listed advocating for staff and learning more about issues facing staff as primary reasons for joining UISC.

Future meeting modalities

The July UISC meeting will be virtual. Kevin will explore hybrid options for the August meeting. Traditionally, meetings have moved around to help UISC members gain exposure to campus.

UISC President themes for 2021-2022

Themes for the year:

1. Establish and maintain a Staff Council relationship with President Wilson through regular meetings and invitations to Staff Council events. Traditionally, the president addresses UISC once a year and meets with SCEC once a month.
2. Continue to encourage and support Staff Council committees with their focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion during their goal setting and the year. The Awards and Election committees were highlighted as examples of a focus on DEI initiatives.
3. Focus on recognizing UI staff members positively impacting our communities locally, at the state level, and/or nationwide.

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UI STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS: VACCINE APPOINTMENT APP – BRIAN FINLEY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

- UI Senior Application Developer and longtime staff member, Brian Finley, spoke to UISC about the [Iowa Vaccine Alerts](#) initiative he developed to assist Iowans in finding COVID vaccine opportunities.
- Brian was inspired by his wife and other medical personnel to help in any way he could, using his talents to fill a need in state-wide communication regarding vaccine opportunities.
- The process he developed involved using data from pharmacies to consistently alert followers on Twitter when new vaccine appointments were available in Iowa. He created similar alerts for other states as well.
- At its peak, @IAVaccineAlerts had around 35,000 followers.
- Based on public health experts' guidance, Brian created a system where more people, especially underrepresented communities, could receive the vaccine even if it involved long drives across the state.
- The account also provided advice for followers: Brian encouraged followers to support the communities where they were receiving the vaccine and to help those limited by technology learn about vaccine opportunities. A small number of Twitter followers were able to help schedule nearly 1,000 people with an average age of 60.
- All donations Brian received were applied to costs directly related to the account or donated to various charities.
- Brian received a [certificate of recognition](#) from the Iowa Senate and a [Governor's Volunteer Award](#), but his favorite is his collaboration with RAYGUN and the [Be a Helper shirt](#). Profits from the shirt go to United Way and the Iowa Public Health Association.
- The account will remain active as potentially new age groups are added or booster shots become available.
- Multiple UISC members thanked Brian for his work and told stories about how they personally used the alerts to find vaccines for themselves, loved ones, or elderly neighbors.

TIAA FARMLAND INVESTMENT

UISC Impact

- UISC members will vote during the July meeting on a resolution urging FRIC ([Funded Retirement and Insurance Committee](#)) and RFIC ([Retirement Fund Investment Committee](#)) to ask TIAA to address transparency and sustainability issues related to rural land grabs. This resolution was distributed to UISC members to review prior to the June meeting. Kevin and Marla will compile questions raised and distribute them to the presenters with the goal to have responses distributed before UISC votes in July. UISC members were encouraged to review the entire packet of information provided to them prior to the July meeting where they will vote on the proposed resolution.

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Matthieu Biger, Erin Irish – Sustainability Charter Committee and Doug Hertzler Senior Policy Analyst at ActionAid

- Computer Science department staff member and [Sustainability Charter Committee](#) member Matthieu Biger presented on what is known about TIAA farmland investments and reasons why UISC members may want to approve the resolution. Faculty Council and Faculty Senate approved the resolution during the past academic year.
- Documents expanding on the information presented by the Sustainability Charter Committee and ActionAid were distributed to UISC members prior to the meeting. Articles from the [New York Times](#) and [The Atlantic](#) were referenced during the presentation.
- TIAA manages over \$1.2 trillion in assets and its farmland investments are valued at \$8 billion. Land purchases are made around the world with some purchases in the US and others in the Brazilian Cerrado region.
- Doug Hertzler, UI PhD graduate and Senior Policy Analyst on land rights and agriculture with ActionAid USA since 2012, and Matthieu outlined the need for TIAA to strengthen its commitments and policies to end land grabbing, deforestation, and human rights abuses in the Brazilian Cerrado region. The Brazilian government found some TIAA land acquisitions violated Brazil law on foreign investments – this is currently being appealed.
- Hertzler and Biger expressed concern over the impacts TIAA’s land purchases have on rural communities in the US, its role in the difficulty of potential farmers keeping or purchasing land, farming practices on TIAA land, and the disruption of food systems due to large scale investments of this nature.
- UI Anthropology professor Laura Graham (present as a guest at the UISC meeting) performed much of the research contained in the additional documents. The groups that Dr. Graham represented in attempts to productively engage TIAA (the American Anthropological Association and the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America) have not received satisfactory responses from TIAA, however, TIAA did respond to Faculty Senate’s inquiries, leading the Sustainability Charter Committee to believe TIAA will respond to large groups of clients.
- Hertzler and Biger expressed their wishes for TIAA to be successful and focus their efforts on sound financial investments - land ownership is disputed in the Brazilian cerrado and is difficult to verify based on information TIAA discloses. There are questions surrounding the data source TIAA uses to claim they do not purchase land belonging to indigenous people.
- TIAA does not own land in Iowa.
- TIAA has pledged to be [Net Zero by 2050](#) – Hertzler questions TIAA’s methods to achieve net zero and the timeline.

Cheryl Reardon – Associate Vice President and Chief HR Officer and Brock Noel, Managing Director from TIAA

- Cheryl Reardon thanked the Sustainability Charter Committee for their work and informed UISC members HR is working with TIAA on these issues.
- Reardon outlined UI employee retirement options:
 - Mandatory and Voluntary Retirement Plans exist and choices are made at the point of hire - IPERS State Plan or Mandatory 403(b) Retirement Plan (TIAA). Employees are automatically enrolled in IPERS if they do not choose an option.

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- There are 59 fund options within the 403(b). Only one fund, TIAA Traditional, contains Farmland Investment.
- Attendees were reminded the University of Iowa offers 2 hours per year to seek advice from a TIAA professional and they are able to log-in to the [TIAA website](#) to learn more about their investments.
- The University of Iowa [Retirement Fund Investment Committee](#) focuses on three areas:
 - Choice - provide participants a set of fund choices to allow for diversification and cover the risk/return spectrum.
 - Performance – objective is to meet or exceed the target benchmark over a market cycle.
 - Appropriate fees – selection of funds will consider the allocation and appropriateness of administrative and investment management costs.
- Brock Noel, a managing director within TIAA, provided another overview of TIAA including history and technical details of the TIAA Traditional Account.
- These investments have a range of assets and can involve direct business loans to different industries. One example includes backing the finance of the Coral Ridge Mall during its build. Farmland is another example where a greater rate of return can be achieved.
- Noel highlighted the history of TIAA’s Responsible Investing (RI) program dating back to the 1970s, sharing that sustainability is something that needs to be faced and unsustainable practices will not be profitable in the long term.
- Noel spotlighted the professionals within Nuveen (TIAA’s asset management arm) who oversee RI activities. These professionals are embedded within the organizational structures of TIAA.
- Noel explained UI employees are able to meet with a TIAA representative to ensure their investments are aligned with their objectives, such as social responsibility.

Meeting Reactions

- Multiple UISC members posted questions in the chat which will be passed on to the appropriate presenters.
- Dr. Graham suggested a meeting with Nuveen RI leaders be arranged to discuss TIAA Farmland Investments, an idea supported by Cheryl Reardon.
- UISC members Em Domingues and Darrelle Wilkinson observed the concerns raised by Biger and Hertzler were not addressed in the second half of the presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

- Meeting adjourned: Carlton Petty moved to adjourn; James Jorris seconded motion; Kevin adjourned the meeting at 4:37 pm.

NEXT MEETING

- July 14, 2021 2:30-4:30 pm, Zoom