

UI Staff Council Executive Committee
Tuesday, February 3, 2026
11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Teams

Attendance

Present

Neda Barrett, Josey Bathke, Amanda Bibb, Hilary Jensen, James Jorris, Sam Mitchell, Bridget Toomey

Not Present

Ashley Peters, Mel Sanders

Administrative Liaison

Kellie Digmann

Guests

David Supp-Montgomerie, Teri Schnelle

Approval of UISC Executive committee meeting minutes

Minutes approval:

- January 7, 2026 – UISC Executive Committee Meeting – motion by Mitchell, second by Jorris, [approved with no edits].

Discussion topics

Civic Dialogue and Facilitating Safe Conversations

David Supp-Montgomerie, Associate Professor of Instruction, Communication Studies and Teri Schnelle, Director, Projects & Partnerships, Student Services shared an overview of their work emerging from an Obermann Center working group focused on strengthening dialogue across campus. Their efforts aim to create a unifying structure that connects academic affairs and student life, beginning with a pilot for first-year students centered on civic dialogue. They described civic dialogue as a mindset and skill set grounded in mutual understanding, close connection, and the discovery of new possibilities, particularly useful for exploring difficult issues with others. They highlighted how group discussions often fall into predictable patterns and explained the importance of the “groan zone,” where discomfort can lead to meaningful learning and shared decision-making. They outlined core skills such as self-awareness, active listening, and collaboration, and shared how these are being incorporated into residence hall settings through programming, conversations, and community-building practices. Early results indicate that students are increasingly willing to engage with one another, attend peer-led events, and demonstrate stronger senses of belonging, respect for norms, and confidence in bridging differences.

The discussion also considered how this framework could be extended to staff, recognizing both a need for more staff-focused support and the importance of consistent institutional language around dialogue. There was a suggestion in offering workshops for employee groups – a possibility of having Staff Council partner with Organizational Effectiveness in UHR adapt and deliver this content. Supp-Montgomerie and Schnelle were interested in collaborating on this as well.

Welcome, Agenda Overview, and Minute Approval

UI Staff Council Executive Committee

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Teams

Barrett welcomed all to February's online only meeting. Reviewed agenda for upcoming meeting. Committee members suggested additional recommendations of underused and lesser-known UI benefits.

Sexual Harassment Policy Update

Barrett provided overview of the Policy on Student Pregnancy and Parenting. It is going to be permanently added to the University Policy Manual. Leadership asked Staff Council Executive Committee to review and provide feedback. Provide suggestions to Barrett.

Review Constituent Corner Results

The committee reviewed January's constituent corner feedback, noting the usefulness of highlighting lesser-known benefits and sharing related input with Justin Fraase. For February, the planned focus is a retrospective discussion, including councilor feedback on what worked well, what didn't, and identifying potential goals moving forward. There will be no council corner scheduled for March.

Staff Appreciation Grant Debrief Update

The committee reviewed the rubric for ranking and grading applications, confirming that the rubric will remain internal and not publicly shared. Members agreed that priority consideration will be given to first-time applicants and individuals represented by Staff Council. A notes section will be added to help clarify the MFK details. Digmann will refine the rubric based on the discussion and distribute the updated version for review.

Staff Council Elections: Vacancies

The committee reviewed current openings and discussed the upcoming open forum scheduled for March 5, 2026. It was noted that Digmann manages all behind-the-scenes coordination for these efforts. Members agreed to ask organizational representatives to send out an email to help promote participation.

Open Discussion Items

The committee reviewed a recent constituent concern – Barrett's response, vacation payout program and questions submitted for upcoming speakers.

Adjournment

- Mitchell motioned to adjourn, Jorris seconded; motion carried.
- Meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Next meeting: March 4, 2026