



## **Rice University Staff Council By-Laws**

*Initially Approved on March 3, 2020*

*Last Amended on April 15, 2025*

### **I. NAME**

- A. The name of the organization will be the Staff Council, herein referred to as SC.
- B. The term “Staff” includes all staff with no limits to status (exempt and nonexempt) or full or part-time staff as defined by their employee classification.

### **II. VISION, MISSION, PURPOSE**

#### **A. Vision:**

The Staff Council will act as an advisory and consultative body to the Executive Vice President for Operations, Finance and Support and, upon request, to any university administrator or business unit on any matter that may affect the issues, policies, and practices that impact or are impacted by staff.

#### **B. Purpose:**

The purpose of the Staff Council will be to build a collaborative and inclusive staff community, facilitate professional growth and networking through a partnership with the Office of Operations, Finance and Support (and/or delegate), Human Resources, and other applicable departments to create a culture of staff advocacy and partnership with the University’s administration that serves to support the formal University mission statement as defined by the Board of Trustees.

#### **C. Mission:**

- 1. To facilitate active and direct communication between staff and the university administration.
- 2. To serve as a sounding board for the administration regarding proposed actions, programs, policies, and procedures that will affect the Staff.
- 3. To provide a forum for hearing and reviewing Staff concerns and interests.
- 4. To recommend Staff representation to serve as appointees on University Standing Committees, Human Resources committees, or ad hoc committee requests.
- 5. To foster the development of a supportive and collaborative network of colleagues through social and professional development opportunities that promote the RICE MILE and university mission.

### **III. MEMBERSHIP**

#### **A. Composition**

- 1. There will be a minimum of 15 SC members every year. The committee will strive for the following distribution:
  - a) 15 SC Members (minimum): (4) from Academic Units, (4) from Non-Academic Units, (4) from Housing and Dining (H&D), Facilities, Engineering & Planning (FE&P), and Rice Police (RUPD); and (3) non-specific, universal members. No more than two (2) members from each



school / division with the exception of the division of Executive Vice President for Operations, Finance and Support, excluding the schools/divisions of the IPC, Chair, and Vice Chair.

- b) Four (4) SC Advisory Board Members (non-voting): Executive Vice President for Operations, Finance and Support (and/or delegate); Vice President of Human Resources (and/or delegate); Assistant Provost (and/or delegate); and the IPC.

- 2. Membership is limited to benefits-eligible staff members who have a minimum of one year continuous service with the University (one year by the start of the next academic year), are in good university standing (as determined by Human Resources), and are approved by their supervisors.

## **B. Selection and Appointment of Members**

- 1. New SC members to serve a full three-year term.
- 2. The Executive Committee (EC) will rebalance the SC body as needed; ensuring no more than 1/3 of the group is rolling off any given year. The EC will make every effort to include a diverse representation of staff based on the membership make-up criteria as outlined in the bylaws.

## **C. Term of Appointment**

- 1. Members of the SC serve three-year terms commencing July 1.
- 2. There is no limit to the number of three-year terms an individual can serve; however, a member cannot serve consecutive three-year terms except for elected officers who may serve two additional years (five years total) before rotating off.
- 3. All members rotating off the SC shall only be eligible for re-selection after one year has passed.

## **IV. RESIGNATION & VACANCIES**

- A. A member may be asked by the EC to resign following repeated neglect of Committee duties.
- B. Resignations from SC will be submitted to the Chair. Unscheduled vacancies shall be filled by appointment by the EC to complete the fiscal year.

## **V. DUTIES OF MEMBERS & MEETINGS**

### **A. Monthly Staff Council Meetings**

- 1. Staff Council meets monthly (12 times per year).
- 2. Attendance is recorded by the Secretary.
- 3. Remote participants must keep video on for the majority of the meeting to be counted as present and actively participating. If this is not feasible, please discuss with Chair or Vice Chair.
- 4. Failure to comply with Staff Council Participation requirements will result in dismissal from Staff Council.
- 5. No more than four (4) total absences per academic year are allowed.
- 6. No more than three (3) unexcused absences per academic year are allowed.



- a) An Unexcused absence occurs when a member fails to provide a valid reason, as determined by the Chair or Vice Chair, within 24 hours after a meeting.
  - After two unexcused absences, a warning email will be sent to inform the Staff Council Member of their status.
- B. Sub-committees & Sub-committee Meetings
  - 1. Each voting member will serve on at least one sub-committee.
  - 2. Sub-committees are expected to meet at least monthly.
    - a) If a sub-committee meets more frequently, they may define their own participation expectations in consultation with the Executive Committee.
  - 3. Sub-committee meeting attendance follows the same guidelines as Staff Council meetings.
    - Attendance is recorded by the Sub-committee Chair.
- C. Event and Activity Participation
  - 1. Events are day-of engagements (e.g., RiceFest, Cookies & Cocoa, Ice Cream Social, Sip and Snack) involving coordinated activity with non-Staff Council members of the Rice community.
  - 2. Activities are preparatory actions that are undertaken (e.g., planning, logistics, marketing/promotions, setup) to support event success.
  - 3. Minimum participation expectations:
    - a) Staff Engagement Committee members must participate in at least two (2) committee-sponsored events or activities per year.
    - b) All other committee members must participate in at least one (1) Staff Council-sponsored event or activity per year (July-June).
    - c) Remote employees should seek ways to contribute through activities or virtual support. Remote Staff Engagement Committee members must contribute to at least two (2) committee-sponsored events or activities per year (July-June). All other remote committee members must contribute to at least one (1) committee-sponsored event or activity per year.
  - 4. Members will receive at least 30 days notice for events requiring participation.
- D. Each member shall act as a communicator between the Committee and University staff; assist in conducting surveys, and participate fully in all activities of the SC.

## VI. ADVISORY BOARD

- A. The role of the Advisory Board is to serve as a partner to SC in reviewing, discussing, and providing feedback on programs, policies, practices and/or concerns that impact staff. All Advisory Board members are non-voting.
- B. The Advisory Board will meet with the current SC Chair, Vice Chair, and Staff Advocacy Chair monthly, either in person or electronically, before the EC meeting.
- C. The members of the Advisory Board can attend the EC and/or general SC meetings at their discretion.
- D. The make-up of the Advisory Board are: Executive Vice President for Operations, Finance and Support (and/or delegate), Vice President of Human Resources (and/or delegate), Assistant Provost (and/or delegate), and the IPC.
- E. The VP of Human Resources or delegate will obtain support from all new members from their school or division leadership.



## **VII. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- A. The Executive Committee (EC) is responsible for setting the agenda before each monthly SC meeting, compiling the SC Annual Achievement Summary, providing feedback on on-going initiatives, and nominating staff for university-wide committee representation.
- B. The EC will meet every spring semester to develop and propose to the SC a strategy and plan for future issues that should come before the SC in the following year. This meeting and the subsequent strategy should be proposed prior to the recruitment of next year's new members.
- C. In addition to SC meetings, the EC members will participate in monthly EC meetings (in person or electronic) to occur at least one to two weeks prior to the general SC meetings.
- D. The EC will periodically review the performance of the SC subcommittees and will advise the SC of any recommended changes in committee charges.
- E. **Selection of the Executive Committee - Voting/Nominations**
  - 1. EC members are to be elected for one-year terms at the regular SC meeting in April. Elections will be the responsibility of the Vice Chair and will be held by secret ballot. Results will be announced at the end of the April meeting.
  - 2. Each member may vote for one candidate for each office. Candidates receiving a majority vote shall be elected to the EC. If no candidate receives a majority vote, the top two candidates shall be placed in a run-off.
  - 3. Regular term of office for EC members commences at the end of the June meeting and terminates at the end of the following June meeting when the new slate of officers takes office.
  - 4. The Immediate Past-Chair (IPC) is to serve as an Advisory Board member available to the current leadership of the SC particularly the Chair, contributing to a continuity of leadership of the SC. The IPC serves for one year beginning July 1 in the year immediately following their service as Chair.
- F. **Executive Committee Members and Responsibilities**
  - 1. **Chair**
    - a) Meets with Advisory Board members on a monthly basis prior to the EC meeting. This meeting may be either in person or electronically.
    - b) Prepares and sends out the agendas for all meetings (EC, Advisory Board, and general SC meetings).
    - c) Presides over all regular and special meetings of the committee.
    - d) Oversees all orders and resolutions of the membership are acted upon.
    - e) Except in the event of a tie, the SC Chair will abstain from voting.
    - f) Approves the final SC budget and all requested expenditures.
    - g) Speaks officially for the Staff Council.
    - h) Minimum time commitment = ten hours per month.



RICE UNIVERSITY

# Staff Council

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## 2. **Vice-Chair**

- a) The Vice Chair will automatically roll into the Chair role at the conclusion of the Chair's term.
- b) Shadows the Chair throughout the year, specifically in meetings with Advisory Board Members where SC business may carry over from year to year.
- c) The Vice Chair is responsible for managing and documenting SC membership in the official records.
- d) Responsible for maintaining all SC expenses throughout the fiscal year.
- e) Liaises with SC Chair and Executive Vice President for Operations, Finance and Support (and/or delegate) budget manager for clarification on any budgetary changes throughout the year.
- f) Provides the annual expense report for inclusion on the SC Annual Report.
- g) Meets with and advises sub-committee chairs on allowable expenses and budget projections for the following fiscal year.
- h) Estimated time commitment = ten hours per month.

## 3. **Recording Secretary** (Amended July 14th, 2022)

- a) Maintains all official meeting minutes, records and resolutions of the Committee, which shall be filed as a permanent record in the Woodson Research Center and uploaded in the SC RiceBox folder.
- b) Schedules monthly meetings & sends calendar invite/location information to all members.
- c) Monitors member attendance and will notify the Chair of repeated absences.
- d) Distributes agenda prior to monthly meetings & records all votes of the SC.
- e) Receives and files all SC reports as a permanent record in the Woodson Research Center and uploads these reports in the SC RiceBox folder.
- f) Distributes copies of meeting minutes to SC members by each meeting.
- g) Estimated time commitment = four hours per month.

## 4. **External Communications Chair**

- a) Serves as the Chair for the Communications subcommittee.
- a) Oversees Staff Council website design, content, and updates.
- b) Oversees information posted to SC social media and final edits to SC newsletter if and when these are implemented.
- c) Estimated time commitment = four hours per month.

## 5. **Standing Subcommittee Chairs** (please see Section VIII below for more details)

## VIII. **STANDING SUBCOMMITTEES**

- A. Standing subcommittees are expected to change over time to adapt to new university initiatives and new priorities defined by the SC Executive Committee. Subcommittee changes may be adopted by amendment to the bylaws.



- B. Standing subcommittee time commitments and annual initiatives shall be submitted to the Executive Committee prior to the recruitment of new members for the following year.
- C. **Selection of Standing Subcommittee Chairs:** Standing subcommittee chairs to be part of the Executive Committee (Staff Engagement, Professional Development, Staff Advocacy, and Staff Recognition) will be elected by a simple majority of Staff Council members present during the April meeting. In the event of a tie, the SC Chair will also vote.
- D. **Term of Service:**
  - 1. Participation in committee goals and initiatives are an expectation of serving on Staff Council. Failure to participate in these initiatives may be considered grounds for dismissal.
  - 2. Each committee will submit their goals, initiatives, and estimated time commitments to the Executive Committee:
    - a) Committees should maintain a working document on RiceBox to track year-over-year initiatives and commitments.
    - b) Time commitments from prior years should be used to inform recruiting and onboarding of new members.
    - c) Deliverables:
      - March 15: A summary of the previous years' participation requirements, accomplished goals, and continuing objectives.
      - September 15: The previous summary with any additional goals added from discussions with new members and amendments to committee participation needs.
- E. **Standing Subcommittees and Examples of Events:**
  - 1. **Communications Subcommittee**
    - a) Responsible for maintaining the Staff Council website, social media, email communications, and any other distributed materials.
    - b) Potential to assist in email monitoring.
  - 2. **Professional Development Subcommittee**
    - a) Responsible for working with the Communications subcommittee on updating the professional development website with options for Rice employees to create a hub of professional development opportunities.
    - b) Work with central partners on how to make professional development more accessible to staff at Rice University.
    - c) As needed, propose new avenues or programs of professional development for staff at Rice University.
  - 3. **Staff Advocacy Subcommittee**
    - a) Coordinate the maintenance, monitoring, facilitation, and tracking of information submitted through the Staff Council proposal structure process.
    - b) Share trends of staff concerns, needs, etc. in Advisory Council meetings.
    - c) Serve as a representative of Staff Council for the Employee Resource Group institutional committee.



- d) As needed, find other ways to work with campus partners to find ways to advocate for staff and promote an inclusive and welcoming culture.

#### **4. Staff Recognition Subcommittee**

- a) Coordinate the annual Staff Excellence Award and conduct yearly improvements as needed.
- b) Find ways to support the recognition, appreciation, and celebration of staff achievements and contributions.
- c) At its inception as a subcommittee, this entity will consist of members from the other subcommittees due to the shortened role duration in alignment with the awards process. If the subcommittee transitions to year-long activities, this structure should be reviewed.

#### **5. Staff Engagement Subcommittee**

- a) Responsible for the yearly ice cream social.
- b) Responsible to brain storm and work with leadership on creating events within the budget scope that can foster connections across campus and increase awareness of Staff Council.
- c) Potential to propose new programs, such as a Welcome Ambassador Program.

### **IX. RESOLUTIONS**

- A. Resolutions will be considered non-binding advisory and consultative business; to be produced, discussed, and voted on as the official position of SC. The purpose is to provide the clear and tangible position of the SC on relevant staff issues. SC members will have the authority to draft and sponsor resolutions for consideration by the full Council.
- B. To introduce a Resolution, a SC member will draft the document, acquire at least one sponsor, and email the Resolution to the SC Chair. The Chair will distribute the Resolution no later than one week before the monthly meeting. The meeting will then include agenda time to discuss and vote on the Resolution. Resolutions require a two-thirds affirmative vote of all eligible voting SC members.

### **X. AMENDMENTS**

- A. These bylaws may be altered or amended at any time. Amendments must be presented to all members of SC in writing or via email a minimum of one week prior to the regularly scheduled monthly meeting.
- B. Amendments to these bylaws will be adopted by a two-thirds affirmative vote of all eligible voting SC members. Any individual who will not be present for the meeting may submit their vote and/or comments to the Recording Secretary at least two days prior to the meeting. The Chair will share any absentee votes and/or comments with SC. The Recording Secretary will record votes during the meeting.
- C. The bylaws are to be reviewed by the Executive Committee at least every two years. Any and all changes will be proposed and voted on by at least two-thirds of the current SC members.



## Appendix I: Staff Council Election Timeline

April Meeting	May Meeting	May - June	June Meeting	July Meeting
Executive Committee (EC) election ballot presented by current Vice Chair and voted on at the regular meeting.	Resolve any ties that resulted in April EC election. Results announced.	Newly elected Executive Committee (EC) and Committee Chairs set priorities for next year.	Outgoing Executive Committee presents new membership.	All new SC members installed.
Executive Committee (EC) election results announced by Vice Chair.	Outgoing Executive Committee reviews recruitment applications and makes selections.	New members are notified of their selection and invited to first meeting in July.	New EC installed at the end of the meeting.	
Hold Staff Council recruitment through the month of April.				