

WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR SUPPORT STAFF ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR
2021-22



Women's Advisory Committee
for Support Staff (WACSS)
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY





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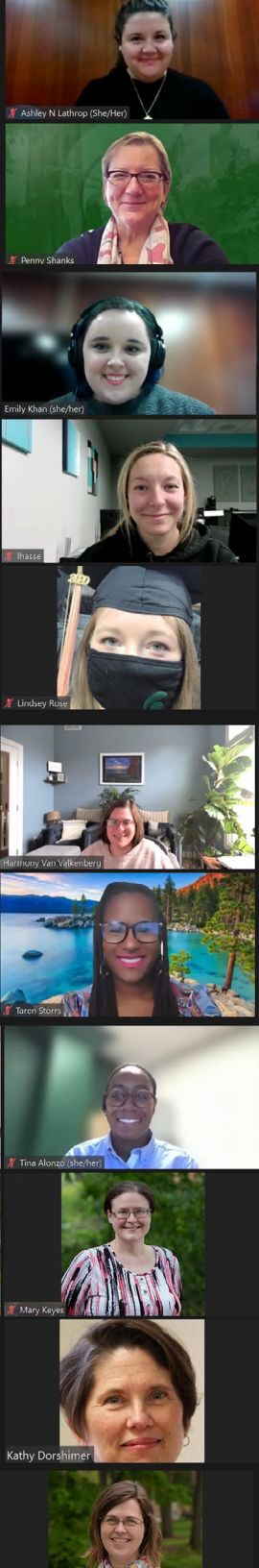
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EXECUTIVE LETTER

The [Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff](#), or WACSS, has been an invaluable resource for Michigan State University in recognizing the leadership and advancement of women support staff through the promotion of equity, education and advocacy.

2021-22 marked the completion of the first year when WACSS shifted to advising the Office for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, or IDI, Human Resources, or HR, and the WorkLife Office. Previously, the committee advised the Office of the President (2019-20) and the Office of the Executive Vice President for Administration for many years before that. The restructuring has allowed WACSS to serve MSU's support staff better and align with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee's Report and Plan.

We recognize that WACSS is integral to advancing MSU's diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic priorities to nurture the success of all employees, especially those that have been disproportionately affected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thus, we thank the WACSS [members](#) for their guidance in ensuring that the issues impacting women support staff are elevated at an institutional level. In addition, the contributions made by the advisory committee have helped improve MSU's responsiveness to related concerns.

EXECUTIVE LETTER

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE:

- Internal restructuring of the advisory committee to be more inclusive.
- Reconnection with the Women's Coordinating Council to align with various women's advisory committees across campus.
- Creation of a mentorship program being piloted in the College of Education.
- Continuation of the Anti-Racism Insight Series and establishing the Building Community Insight Series.

The committee has emphasized serving as a collective to establish a community of belonging and identify actionable steps to advocate for a safe and just work environment for all.

This year, we are proud to highlight the strengthening relationship with the [Women's Networking Association](#) in the MSU WorkLife Office that has expanded professional development and leadership offerings. In addition, the reach of WACSS has increased networking membership on LinkedIn by 600%, furthering MSU's visibility for incoming staff and those looking to MSU as a potential employer.

IN ADDITION, WACSS HAS WORKED TO SUPPORT HIRING SEARCHES THAT INCLUDED FILLING THE FOLLOWING ROLES:

- Vice President Chief Human Resources Officer in HR.
- Director of Equity and Compliance in IDI.
- Associate Director for Apartment Facilities/Central Maintenance in Residence Education and Housing Services.

Accordingly, with the appointment of Matt Olovson, J.D. as the Director of Equity and Compliance, we look forward to renewed partnership between WACSS and IDI.

Throughout the year, WACSS committee members have provided robust programming across campus that includes addressing topics from mental health, neurodiversity, work life balance, bystander intervention and managing conflict, among many other areas.

Finally, WACSS has continued to serve as a leader in providing a supportive environment around Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct that includes supporting the Know More @ MSU Survey and continuing to advise the RVSM Workgroup.

As we set our objectives for the academic year 2022-23, WACSS will continue to serve as a critical advisor to inform MSU's diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic priorities.

Sincerely,

Jabbar R. Bennett, Ph.D. ([he/him](#))

VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER,
[OFFICE FOR INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION](#)

Rick Fanning, J.D. ([he/him](#))

INTERIM ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT,
[HUMAN RESOURCES](#) DIRECTOR, OFFICE
OF EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Jaimie Hutchison ([she/her](#))

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, [WORKLIFE OFFICE](#)

CHAIR LETTER

As the chair of the esteemed Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS), it is my honor to write this letter highlighting the work the committee has done during the 2021-22 academic year to build a stronger, more inclusive Spartan community.

The three keys to WACSS's success this year were collaboration, candor, and grace. Throughout the year, the committee openly communicated with one another our capacity to take on tasks, offered each other grace and assistance when deadlines were adjusted, and collaborated across focus areas to support the work. WACSS accomplished many of our lofty goals for the year, including: growing our audiences on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn by 9.1%, 23.6%, and 48.0% respectively and leveraging these channels to create an engaged community of Spartans; presenting the Anti-Racism Insight Series and Building Community Insight Series, each offering opportunities to learn and grow together; hosting not just one but two successful, 150+ person events in the Spartantastic WACSS Forum series; launching the Spartner mentorship program, including a funded pilot test within the College of Education; and highlighting the accomplishments of each member with their supervisor through personalized letters.

CHAIR LETTER

As I reflect on the successes of this year's committee, I would like to take a moment to personally thank every member of WACSS from this year for their hard work and dedication to Michigan State University's support staff. Thank you:

- Tina Alonzo, for bringing a critical DEI lens to all of her work on the committee and beyond, especially in the role of vice chair.
- Kathy Dorshimer, for offering a different perspective on issues and detailing steps needed to accomplish tasks.
- Heather Dover, for jumping right in on planning the committee's largest annual event without hesitation.
- Lindsay Hasse, for representing all Labor support staff for the year and ensuring the voice of on-site support staff was heard and considered.
- Meghan Hill, for gracefully stepping in when critical tasks were left open.
- Crissy Hodges-Chakrani, for stepping into the role of secretary when the opportunity was presented and for leading the successful Anti-Racism Insight Series for the second year in a row.
- Mary Keyes, for not being afraid to voice her perspective and presenting unique opportunities to the committee.
- Ashley Lathrop, for serving as a mentor for all committee members (myself included) and for trying something outside her comfort zone by joining the Communications & Marketing subcommittee.
- Shannon McGaughey, for trying out something new as committee secretary and helping to better define the role and its work.
- Anslee Norris, for bringing the perspective of part-time support staff employees to the table and ensuring their needs were met.
- Arianna Perrien, for taking on the role of chair for the Events & Engagement subcommittee and pulling together two 150+ attendee events and more.
- Lindsey Rose, for serving as a mentor to new members and always being willing to lend a helping hand.
- Penny Shanks, for being willing to take a step back to re-evaluate critical decisions and tactfully bringing issues, concerns, and/or positive outcomes back to the committee for consideration.
- Taren Storrs, for jumping in as a subcommittee chair during her first year and keeping permanently remote/long-distance support staff voices top-of-mind for all.
- Harmony Van Valkenberg, for actively participating in accomplishing difficult goals as a first-year member.
- Alison Virag-McCann, for gracefully navigating an ever-changing recruitment landscape and making new members feel welcome and appreciated.
- Dr. Jabbar R. Bennett, for his sponsorship of this committee's work and for continuously providing thoughtful insights and considerations.
- Rick Fanning, for stepping into an interim role and offering the committee full support and transparency.
- Jaimie Hutchison, for offering support to WACSS in all that we do and always being willing to help with the heavy lifting.

I am grateful to have served as the WACSS chair for the 2021-22 year. This is a dynamic committee that remains committed to raising the voices of women support staff at MSU, and I look forward to the continued growth of WACSS and our Spartan community as we enter the 2022-23 year.

Go Green,
Emily Khan

CHAIR, 2021-22
WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FOR SUPPORT STAFF (WACSS)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff, or WACSS, is pleased to highlight activities and efforts put forth to reflect strategic implementation of our values. Here we highlight several achievements and milestones that help to advance advocacy, connectivity, engagement, and staff development.

- Engagement and awareness increased by 70% with close to 150 posts
- Social media employee engagement increased by more than 18.5 percent
- Offered 14 Anti-Racism Insight Series learning sessions with more than 1,000 in employee participation
- Presented the Annual Spring Forum with more than 250 attendees, resulting in an 82 percent registrant to attendee rate.
- Launched the inaugural in-person network event, entitled "Spartantastic: Growing Support Staff Connections in the Gardens"
- Established the Building Community Insight Series
- Piloted the first WACSS "Spartner" mentorship program with the College of Education

As WACSS enters the new fiscal year, we will be exploring the opportunity to expand the mission of representation of the committee that would require a name change to improve campus alignment, promote inclusion, and expand impact. This broadened scope does not aim to replace or remove the focus on women issues but open avenues for additional areas of focus and elevate the voice of all staff. WACSS is looking forward to the journey ahead and strengthening our commitment to staff and building community.

OUR COMMITMENT

The Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS) is guided by our commitment to voice staff issues, specifically those that relate to women support staff. The committee's goal is to share information and provide a channel of communication between the university's Chief Diversity Officer and support staff, that has resulted in the development of many [initiatives](#) and outcomes since its establishment in 1976.

OUR COMMITMENT IS DRIVEN BY OUR VALUES:

ADVOCACY: Serve as a liaison to influence key decision making at MSU that affects women support staff.

CONNECTIVITY: Unite women support staff and stakeholders through effective and innovative two-way communication. Engagement: Maximize the involvement of women support staff and provide an opportunity to exchange information.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: Provide, promote, support, and encourage development opportunities for women support staff.

FOUR SUBCOMMITTEES OPERATE WITHIN THE COMMITTEE:



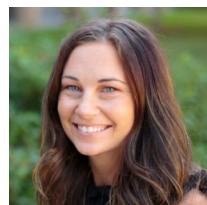
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING (CM)

*Chaired by Taren Storrs,
director, Alumni Engagement
-West Coast*



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

*Chaired by Crissy Hodges-Chakrani,
executive assistant,
Osteopathic Surgical Specialties*



EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENT (EE)

*Chaired by Arianna Perrien,
administrative business analyst,
Food Science and Human Nutrition*



MEMBERSHIP, BENEFITS, AND DEVELOPMENT (MBD)

*Chaired by Alison Virag-McCann,
tech team manager,
Information Technology*

The Committee welcomes [ongoing input](#) from all support staff. Its role is to provide a wide range of views on issues that staff members face at MSU. You may also [contact any member](#) of the committee to represent this concern for you. If you have any questions, please contact wacss@msu.edu.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

The Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS) has four [subcommittees](#) that support efforts involving communications, marketing, recruitment, signature events, championing university initiatives, policy, community partnerships, and programs. Below are summaries and progress of actions taken to advance advocacy, connectivity, engagement, and development of staff.



Engagement and Awareness

In the inaugural year of the Communications and Marketing Subcommittee, the focus was to increase engagement and awareness through social media platforms, websites, and email. The team launched two campaigns this year, #WellnessWednesdays and #ThinkUpThursdays. Wellness Wednesdays share campus, community, and online opportunities that seek to improve personal wellness by engaging mind, body, and/or spirit. Think Up Thursdays shares information on trainings, tips, and tricks to support career development. In doing so, we have achieved about a 70 percent increase with close to 150 posts. Employee engagement increased by more than 18.5 percent, totaling 939 across Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram from July 2021 through May 2022.

Additionally, we alternated social media promotion from our campus and community partners as well as HR updates on Mondays and Tuesdays and continue to promote WACSS' events and maintain the website to ensure accurate and current events.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM	JULY 2021	MAY 2022
Facebook	515	564
LinkedIn	150	221
Instagram	128	154

CONNECT WITH US!

Facebook: facebook.com/groups/msuwacss/

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/msuwacss

Instagram: [@msu.wacss](https://instagram.com/msu.wacss)

Additionally, we alternated social media promotion from our campus and community partners as well as HR updates on Mondays and Tuesdays and continue to promote WACSS' events and maintain the website to ensure accurate and current events.

WACSS Anti-Racism Insight Series



PLAY
COMPILATION
OF SERIES

Support Staff Hiring Process and Data Collection

In alignment with the university strategic priorities to expand recruitment, retention and career development, the committee reached out to campus partners to learn and discover data pertaining to applicant

and interview pools, talent sourcing, and retention. Opportunities for improvement were shared accordingly to inform the university strategic plan implementation. The Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion is collaborating across campus to explore the creation of institution-wide data sharing practices and policies.

Anti-Racism Insight Series

The WACSS Anti-Racism Insight Series, launched FY21 co-sponsored by the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, continued forward with year two. This program offered fourteen learning sessions

during October 2022 through March 2022 with more than 1,000 in employee participation. Recordings may be viewed [here](#).



Annual Spring Forum

The 2022 Spring Forum, entitled Spartantastic: *The Power of the Spartan Community*, hosted virtually and focused on an over-arching theme of building community.

The event consisted of remarks from university leadership: President Samuel L. Stanley, Jr.; Executive Vice President for Administration, Dr. Melissa Woo; and Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Jabbar R. Bennett. Following

these remarks, panel members shared insights and experiences of Spartan Community. The panel consisted of the following members:

- Dorinda J. Carter Andrews, Ph.D., Professor and Chairperson, Department of Teacher Education
- Marita Gilbert, Ph.D., Associate Dean of Diversity and Campus Inclusion, College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Lizzy King, Interim Director, MSU Union
- Christine Leese, Chief of Staff, Infrastructure Planning and Facilities

The event brought more than 250 attendees, resulting in an 82 percent registrant to attendee rate. A post-event survey was distributed to all participants who attended the webinar, and we received overall positive feedback from 136 unique responses, resulting in a 54% response rate. Highlights from the survey include:

- Fifty percent of respondents strongly agree, and 21 percent agree with the statement “the subject matter presented by the panel was important to me”.
- Sixty-six percent of respondents are most interested in WACSS's recommending new or changes to existing policies, procedures, and

processes that impact support staff, especially women support staff at MSU.

- Participants either strongly agree (46%) or somewhat agree (25%) that they were able to draw connections between their work and the conversations by the panel members.

Open feedback applauded the committee's ability to transform the forum to a virtual setting, allowing more inclusivity and participation from support staff whose assignments are not primarily on campus, although some missed the opportunity for an in-person gathering.

2022 Support Staff Networking Event

In addition to the 2022 Annual Spring Forum, the committee planned an in-person, follow-up event at MSU Gardens entitled: Spartantastic: Growing Support Staff Connections in the Gardens. The event provided phot op with Sparty, a strolling light lunch buffet for about three hundred people, and music by the MSU Jazz quartet.

Building Community Insight Series

Furthering our commitment to building community, the Events and Engagement subcommittee partnered with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion subcommittee to establish the Building Community Insight Series of virtual and in-person events offered throughout the year, including Neurodiversity: Towards a More Inclusive Campus featuring RCPD Ability Access Specialists; and the WACSS Equine Experience in partnership with the MSU Horse Teaching and Research Center that shared insights on the therapeutic benefits of equine experiences and how forming a connection with a horse can increase empathy and trust and building self-confidence.

Spartner Mentorship Program

The Membership, Benefits, and Development subcommittee is proud to have piloted our first “Spartner” mentorship program with the College of Education. The program pairs mentors and mentees of varying backgrounds, years of employment, and helps to develop communication and leadership skills for participants. This program helps to build a stronger community



and environment that can support the growth within our institution and promote the mission, vision, and values of the university. There were twelve pilot program participants and six pairings:

- Sue Sipkovsky, research administrator II/S, Teacher Education
- Jerome Graham Ph.D., assistant professor, K-12 Educational Administration
- Tracey Covassin Ph.D., professor, Kinesiology
- Brittany Dillman, assistant professor, Counseling, Education Psychology & Special Education
- Matthew Harkey Ph.D., assistant professor, Kinesiology
- Mary Keyes, academic programs and faculty support administrator, Teacher Education
- Jane Deacon, marketing and sales coordinator in College of Education Academic Affairs
- Alyssa Morley Ph.D., assistant professor, Teacher Education
- Terah Chambers, Ph.D., associate dean, College of Education Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

MOVING FORWARD

Growth and Future Direction

The Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS) is guided by our commitment to voice staff issues, specifically those that relate to women support staff. The committee's goal is to share information and provide a channel of communication between the university's Chief Diversity Officer and support staff, that has resulted in the development of many [initiatives](#) and outcomes since its establishment in 1976.

WACSS, as it currently stands being the only dedicated committee for staff, recognizes the necessity and opportunity to evolve and expand. MSU staff are often generally underrepresented across the university and academic staff is often in the gray area, although many roles are more aligned with support staff roles. As such, the committee is exploring this opportunity to expand representation and mission that would require a name change to improve campus alignment, promote inclusion, and expand impact. This broadened scope does not aim to replace or remove the focus on women issues but open avenues for additional areas of focus and elevate the voice of all staff.

In addition to evaluating the current structure of this committee, we will be looking to offering (hybrid) networking events to disburse information widely and improve employee awareness of participation opportunities. Also, the committee is continuing its effort toward a support staff hiring toolkit in partnership with the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion. The team is also looking forward to continued exploration of a WACSS support staff survey to better understand and identify opportunities that will elevate our voices and influence key institutional decisions.

We welcome [ongoing input](#) from all support staff. You may also [contact any member](#) of the committee to share information, concerns, or issues you may experience. We look forward to continuing the conversation with our campus partners and stakeholders and serving staff to inform and support strategic priorities of MSU. If you have any questions, please contact wacss@msu.edu.



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