

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

October 31, 2022

MEMORANDUM

To: Samuel L. Stanley Jr, M.D.
President, Michigan State University

From: Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS)

Subject: Building on employee recognition efforts

Purpose and intent

The Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS) would like to extend our gratitude for the most recent actions you and the university administration have taken to recognize the contributions of employees throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We appreciate the recent historic actions taken by the administration—the [extended employee break](#) and [employee recognition bonus](#)—and the positive impact these actions have had on support staff physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. The unexpected recognition shows how much you care about support staff and is one way the university can continue to take steps toward creating an inclusive and supportive Spartan community.

As stated in our [May 13, 2021 memorandum](#), we understand that the pandemic has been a uniquely difficult challenge for university leadership. We wanted to take this opportunity to follow up on our suggestions for continued support of MSU's support staff, and particularly our on-site workers. As such, please consider the following ideas for addressing the continued stress faced by support staff employees.

Extended employee break

As we approach the end of the 2022 calendar year, WACSS recognizes that units throughout the university have continued to tirelessly work in support of MSU's mission. However, many have faced new stresses, additional responsibilities, and—in some cases—dramatic understaffing. All of this leads to burnout—and copious amounts of it. “A 2020 Gallup report, *Employee Burnout: Causes and Cures*, found that 76% of employees sometimes experience burnout on the job and 28% stating they feel burnout ‘often’ or ‘always.’ ...



Women's Advisory Committee for Support Staff

Michigan State University
Hannah Administration Building
426 Auditorium Road, Room 444
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

Phone: 517.355.5014
Email: wacss@msu.edu
wacss.msu.edu

This study found that financial rewards, whether that be in the form of raises, bonuses or paid time off, are the most important and most successful rewards you can offer an employee.” ([Forbes Advisor](#))

Retention is becoming an overwhelming issue amongst employers, and Michigan State University is not shielded from this sweeping epidemic. “Employees who feel appropriately recognized and rewarded by workplaces are much easier to retain long term, but studies also show those employees will work harder and be more productive. Unfortunately, over 80% of American employees say they don’t feel recognized or rewarded.” ([Forbes Advisor](#))

The extended employee break was well-received by many support staff members, if not all. Given your understanding of circumstances in which taking an extended break is infeasible for some units and employees, we’d like to suggest implementing the extended break as an annual effort, requiring units that can close to do so and allowing days to be utilized by end of fiscal year for operations where this is impractical.

Furthermore, in acknowledgement of our significantly diverse community of Spartans, not everyone recognizes or celebrates the many holidays included as part of our academic calendar. Therefore, WACSS strongly recommends examining the feasibility of personal observance days. This would allow for holiday days to be flexibly applied by employees throughout the year at times that would more closely align with their religious, racial, and/or cultural identities. This directly supports our continued journey of building inclusive communities for all Spartans.

Giving voice to support staff

As part of the university’s ongoing commitment to DEI and respecting the contributions of all Spartans, we appreciate the opportunities given to participate in decision-making processes and see a continued need to give voice to support staff. It’s important to recognize the diversity of thought, experiences, and identity among staff—including those who are non-unionized or are in unionized positions but not dues-paying—and the different levels and types of communications that are received within unions and departments. Therefore, there is a real perception amongst support staff that decisions are made without the definitive opportunity for support staff to provide input and buy-in, or knowing whether they are represented at the table.

As an integral part of MSU, we look forward to increased transparency and opportunities to collaborate and actively participate in discussions that impact decisions.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you for MSU.

Kind regards,

Women’s Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS)

cc: Jabbar R. Bennett, Christina Brogdon, Jaimie Hutchison