



MURRAY STATE
UNIVERSITY

Staff Congress

2024-25

ANNUAL REPORT

Since 1983, Staff Congress has been representing all staff employees on the main campus as well as the regional campuses. Our purpose is to create a strong bond with staff colleagues, solicit input, express concerns, and make suggestions and recommendations based upon staff feedback.

Staff Congress works to promote better cooperation among the University Administration, faculty, students, and fellow staff members. When appropriate, Staff Congress will make recommendations to the University Administration, Staff Regent, and Board of Regents. We continually strive to facilitate communication and collaboration among staff members.

<https://www.murraystate.edu/staffcongress>





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Meet Your Members

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2024-25

President

Audrey Neal, Director
TRIO Talent Search

Vice President

Jeremy McKeel, Manager
Digital Media Services

Treasurer

Tressa Ross, Coordinator
COEHS Recruitment & Retention
Center

Past President

Trish Lofton, Administrative
Assistant, Curris Center

Secretary

Kim Cottingham, Administrative
Assistant, Staff Congress

Staff Regent

Dr. David Wilson
Director of Housing

Group A: President

Jeremy McKeel

Group B: Academic Affairs

Gerry Harris
Dayna Hutchinson
Jodi Hanneman
Kristen Swisher

Group C: Finance & Admin Svcs

David Looney
Duane Dycus
David Shelton
Brandon Johnson
Joshua Tillson

Group D: Student Affairs & Enrollment Mgmt

Justin Thomas
Audrey Neal
Amanda Mansfield

At-Large

Tami Dandeneau
Matt Jones
Kim Newbern
Tressa Ross
Rachel Stewart
Josh Hutson
Casey Workman
Lisa Willis
Dedrick Brooks
Orville Herndon
Trish Lofton
Mary Steely

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Staff Congress represents the needs and concerns of Murray State staff, ensuring their voices are heard and valued in decisions that shape our university.

02

Goals & Objectives

Ongoing Priorities

- Complete realignment to strengthen staff representation.
- Continue promoting Staff Congress initiatives to boost awareness.
- Review and update the Staff Excellence Award policy.
- Establish a Welcome Committee to support new employees.
- Create a new-employee track within Staff Success Week for tailored orientation and resources.

Goal #1

Provide ongoing opportunities for staff to share information and provide feedback.

- Gathered staff input on priority issues through listening sessions:
 - Remote/flexible work policy (Feb. 18 & 25)
 - Compensation study (May 14)
- Strengthened staff voice by implementing constituency groups across the university.
- Expanded event visibility and engagement as committee chairs partnered with the Communications Committee to promote their initiatives.

Goal #2

Facilitate the research and development of additional staff recognition programs, including enhanced promotion of current awards.

- Continued to emphasize promotion of Staff Congress initiatives and resources across campus.
- Created the Racer Spirit Awards to celebrate staff contributions. A total of 15 awards were presented in the spring semester, and nominees will continue to be contacted prior to the Sept. 30 Staff Excellence award nomination deadline.

Goal #3

Help new employees with acclimation and provide ongoing support for current employees.

- Welcomed new staff through monthly emails from the Staff Congress President and inclusion in constituency groups.
- Added a dedicated section for new employees to the annual staff survey, ensuring their perspectives are heard.
- Organized Staff Success Week events to support staff development and engagement: Jan. 7–10 and May 27–30.

Committee Highlights

Turning Staff Input into Action

The work of Staff Congress is carried out through standing committees, each focused on a specific area of staff engagement, advocacy, and recognition. Our Goals and Objectives—set each year and shaped by staff input from the annual survey and listening sessions—guide their work and ensure priorities reflect the needs of staff. The highlights below showcase how our committees advanced those goals over the past year and demonstrate the many ways Staff Congress supports staff across the university.

You'll find the work of the Scholarship, Staff Recognition and Special Events, Staff Survey, and Community Involvement and Access committees highlighted in other sections of this report.



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Working Conditions

Researched peer institutions to explore a possible 4-day summer work week.

Credentials & Elections

Conducted elections April 22–23, 2025 with 143 voters (23.4% turnout). 7 candidates and 40 write-ins filled 10 open seats.

Personnel Policies & Benefits

Reviewed weather and sick leave policies; no changes made. Deferred tuition and overtime policy action until new leadership.

Communications

Grew Staff Congress's social media presence.

Facebook: 2,863 engagements (+139%) and 64 new followers (+237%).

Instagram: 92 followers.

Staff Recognition

Philip R. Schooley Staff Excellence Awards

Established by the Murray State Board of Regents in 1986, the Staff Excellence Awards honor staff whose dedication and service make a lasting impact on the university. Each year, these awards celebrate the vital role staff play in advancing Murray State's mission.

Facilities Management/General Representatives



Rick Mehlbauer, Sergeant
MSU Police Department



Lisa Willis, Lab Technician II
Breathitt Veterinary Center

Executive/Managerial Representatives



Joshua Hutson, Assistant
Coordinator of College Technology
College of Humanities & Fine Arts



John Cooper Levering
College Technology Coordinator
College of Education & Human Services

At-Large Representatives



Joanne Guns, Associate Director
of Housing and Administrative
Services, Housing Department



HuiChang Chae, Lab Technician III
Breathitt Veterinary Center

Secretarial/Clerical Representatives



Dayna Hutchinson, Administrative Assistant I, Department of Management, Marketing, Business Administration, and Logistics and Supply Chain Management



Shelia Haley, Executive Assistant
Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Years of Service



Thirty-Five Years of Service
Angela Darnell
(not pictured: Shelia Haley and Richard Blaylock)



Thirty Years of Service
Eric Frederick



Twenty-Five Years of Service
Stacy Bell, Mark Ballard, Deana Gordon, Jeremy McKeel
Not pictured: Grace Anderson, Marty Anderson, Michael Black, Sherry Lamb, Shasta O'Neal, Jennifer Thorn, and Brantly Travis



Twenty Years of Service
Garrett Wheatley, Charley Allen, Michael Inman, Darin Harness, Donald Klukan
Not pictured: Christopher Cobb, Carol Gallimore, Donna Jackson, Benjamin O'Neal, Rhonda Redden, Lawrence Szeszol

Years of Service (continued)

Fifteen Years of Service

Colleen Anderson, Adrian Benton, Tina Bernot, Lea Bowland, Danielle Conway, Susanne D'Angelo, Tamela Darnell, Stephen Keene, Matthew Kennedy, Patricia Lofton, Christopher Neal, Wendell Poynor, Ashley Rogers, Shawn Smee, Ambie Smock, Rachel Stewart, RC Missy Tish, Jennifer Todd, Angie Trzepacz, and Mandy Youngblood

Ten Years of Service

Emily Asher, Deborah Cunningham, Hannah Durbin, Ladonna Hamontree, Victoria Herndon, Jamie Higgins, Dawn Jones, Alexander Kudirka, Matthew Lodge, Stephanie Peck, Robert Pender, Barry Rice, and Brian Tucker

Five Years of Service

Kimberly Archey, Clara Bearsby, Dedrick Brooks, Terry Causey, Jessica Cook, Amy Cox, Michael D'Elia, Mary Futrell Mayfield, Joanne Guns, Steven Guns, Samantha Haneline, Anne Hess, Katherine Kriesky, Robert Miller, Kristen Oakley, Tammy Reifel, Casey Rowe, Kristina Rowhuff, Lisa Showmaker, Jorge Luiz Simao Melo Caetano, Daniel Skirka, Scott Svebakken, Kristen Swisher, Samantha Talmadge, Leigh Weaver Conyers, and Keith York

Professional Development & Learning Support

Kay R. Hays Professional Development Fund

This fund was created to support Murray State staff in pursuing professional development opportunities that strengthen their skills and benefit the university community. Applications are accepted each semester, and recipients receive funding to cover costs not provided by their department.

Staff Congress Foundation / Marie Jones Textbook Scholarship

Established by Staff Congress, this scholarship helps staff and their dependents with the cost of textbooks. Two awards of up to \$250 are given each semester, providing direct support to students and families in continuing their education at Murray State.



Kaitlin Green, Academic Coordinator of Upward Bound - Henderson County, is this semester's recipient of the Kay R. Hays Professional Development Fund. She participated in the Henderson Leadership Initiative, gaining new leadership skills while helping strengthen her community.

Staff Voices

Staff Congress is committed to ensuring that the voices of staff are heard and represented in decision-making at Murray State. Through listening sessions and surveys, we provide opportunities for employees to share concerns, ask questions, and help shape the future of our workplace. These conversations guide our advocacy and keep staff needs at the center of our work.

LISTENING SESSIONS

In 2025, Staff Congress hosted multiple listening sessions to gather direct feedback from staff on two critical topics: remote/flexible work policies and the staff compensation study. These sessions gave employees a space to share their perspectives and highlight areas where greater clarity, consistency, and support are needed.

Remote/Flexible Work (February 18 and 25, 2025)

- Staff cited work-life balance as the greatest benefit of remote/flexible options.
- Concerns centered on inconsistent application across departments.
- Employees requested clearer communication of policies and training for supervisors to ensure fairness.

Compensation Study (May 14, 2025)

- Staff called for clear explanations of job grade placement, equity across units, and a formal appeal process.
- Staff expressed strong support for consistent cost-of-living adjustments alongside fair, transparent merit pay.
- Staff requested a standardized, funded job audit process with employee input, along with clearer policies for recognizing relevant degrees and certifications.
- Staff raised concerns about how the Evergreen study was implemented and emphasized the need for salaries to remain competitive with peer institutions.

BY THE NUMBERS

- **6 sessions** held (Feb. 18 & 25 on Remote/Flex Work; May sessions on Compensation Study)
- **112 participants total** (50 in February, 62 in May)
- **Top themes:** work-life balance, fairness and consistency across departments, pay grade transparency, COLA and merit pay, job audits, and market competitiveness

Staff Survey

The annual Staff Perspective Survey was conducted from February 11 – March 14, 2025, gathering feedback from 321 staff members across all divisions and job categories. The survey captures staff perceptions of communication, compensation, workplace conditions, and leadership, providing a vital snapshot of employee experiences at Murray State. This year, the survey was expanded to include feedback from new employees on their onboarding experiences, and Staff Congress also introduced shorter Qualtrics surveys to gather input year-round.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Onboarding & Support**
 - Staff who felt “welcomed and supported” during onboarding: ~59%
 - Many noted gaps in structured training and a “sink or swim” approach.
- **Representation & Communication**
 - ~80% reported receiving timely communication from Staff Congress.
 - ~63% felt adequately represented by Staff Congress and the Staff Regent.
 - Comments called for clearer, more consistent updates and better visibility of Staff Congress efforts.
- **Workplace Experience**
 - Staff praised coworker support and benefits.
 - Concerns centered on compensation, workload, and outdated processes (e.g., reliance on paper systems, lack of digital tools).
- **Compensation & Cost of Living**
 - Only ~28% agreed they are paid adequately and fairly for their work.
 - Staff called for regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and more equitable distribution of raises.
- **Leadership & Morale**
 - Feedback highlighted the need for greater transparency, accountability, and engagement from university leadership.
 - Many expressed hope that the incoming president will renew focus on staff morale, compensation, and inclusion.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 321 responses across all divisions
- 59% felt adequately supported during onboarding
- 80% said Staff Congress provides timely communication
- 28% felt adequately and fairly compensated
- **Top concerns:** pay equity, workload, communication, outdated processes

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Staff Success Week

Staff Success Week is coordinated by the Community, Involvement, and Access Committee (formerly the Diversity, Equity, and Access Committee). The program provides opportunities for employees to learn, recharge, and connect across campus, with sessions focused on professional growth, workplace skills, and personal well-being. This year's highlights included training on technology tools, retirement planning, mindfulness, conflict resolution, and building positive work culture. Held twice each year, Staff Success Week reflects Staff Congress's commitment to staff development and engagement. Recorded sessions are available on the Staff Congress website for those unable to attend live.



Staff Success Week – January 7–9, 2025

- Jan. 7 – 2:00 PM | Student Staff: Processes and Diversity in Hiring
Student Workers – Katie Kriesky
- Jan. 8 – 10:00 AM | Enhancing Workflow with AI – Rebecca Simons
- Jan. 8 – 1:00 PM | Procurement 101 with Q&A – Beth Ward
- Jan. 9 – 11:00 AM | Facilities 101 with Q&A – Megan Preston & Jaclyn Morgan
- Jan. 9 – 1:00 PM | Self Care & Work/Life Balance – Angie Trzepacz

Staff Success Week – May 27–30, 2025

- May 27 – 9:00 AM | Guided Meditation – Valerie Ernstberger
- May 27 – 3:00 PM | Beginner Yoga – Gayle Rogers
- May 28 – 9:00 AM | Retirement 101 – Marcie Clark & Mandy Lawson
- May 28 – 1:00 PM | Conflict Resolution – Dr. S.G. Carthell
- May 29 – 9:00 AM | Supervisor Panel: Positive Work Culture – Matt Purdy, Kendrick Quisenberry, Renee Fister, Cris Ferguson, Re’Nita Avery
- May 29 – 1:00 PM | Boosting Productivity Using AI – Tyler Burress
- May 30 – 9:00 AM | Google Workspace 101 – Rachel Stewart
- May 30 – 1:00 PM | Supporting First-Gen Students – Jennifer Smith

Looking Ahead

Staff Congress has made exciting plans for the year ahead, and we are committed to building on the progress and successes of this past year. The work we do is only possible because of the dedication and voices of Murray State staff. Your feedback through surveys, listening sessions, and everyday conversations continues to shape our goals and guide our advocacy.

In the coming year, we will focus on strengthening professional development, exploring workplace policies that support staff success, and celebrating the many contributions staff make to the life of our university. We know that when staff thrive, the entire Murray State community benefits.

We also want to emphasize that Staff Congress is your organization. We welcome collaboration, new ideas, and honest feedback. Whether you attend a meeting, reach out to a representative, or connect with us through social media, your input helps us represent staff more effectively and ensures that your needs are heard at every level of the university.

We are grateful for the continued dedication of Murray State staff and for the trust you place in Staff Congress to represent your voice. Together, we will continue to create a campus culture rooted in support, engagement, and pride.

**We are staff. We are supporters.
We are Racers.**



Email

msu.staffcongress@murraystate.edu



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<https://www.facebook.com/murraystatestaffcongress/>



Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/murraystatestaffcongress/>