I am honored to be the first Staff Council President elected to a two year term through a campus-wide election under the new bylaws adopted by the council last year. Of the approximately 2,200 staff members, 30% or 675 individuals voted in this election. While this is better than we expected, there is still room for improvement. Much of my energy this year will be spent reaching out to staff across campus to encourage their involvement in the work of the Staff Council.

We know that outreach works and that addressing the specific needs of staff members is essential in this process. Over the past few years Staff Council became aware that staff members in Custodial Services felt disenfranchised from the larger campus community. This could be due to a lack of computer access or computer literacy as well as language barriers and late shifts. Through the efforts of Lesley Kornegay, Director of Custodial Services and the Staff Council Office we were able to address these specific issues by attending their June training sessions. With the help of Bosnian and Vietnamese interpreters, we explained the election process and offered paper ballots to those without computer access. As a result this department had a 78% participation rate in this year’s Staff Council Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections making it the department with the largest participation rate.

Another recent outreach effort involves our beautiful new informational brochure which has been distributed to all staff, deans, directors, chairs and administration along with my own letter encouraging involvement. We have high hopes that these efforts will broaden both knowledge and engagement among our staff.

The Staff Council is currently conducting the remainder of its annual elections for unit representation. It is essential that all departments and units have proportional representation, as determined by an annual census. This model, similar to that of the Faculty Senate, ensures representation from across all of campus and increases membership to and participation with the Staff Council. We appreciate the efforts of President Fogel and Provost Hughes to support and endorse our work and thank them for their recent all campus email encouraging staff involvement in Staff Council.