



September 2023

Council members attend monthly meetings that are not open to the public. This brief highlights non-confidential topics that may be shared widely with staff. Any questions can be directed to the linked resources or to askUSAC@psu.edu. For information on USAC, the Voice for Penn State Staff, visit the [USAC website](#).

Guest Speakers

Danny Shaha, First Amendment and Free Speech

Danny Shaha, associate vice president of student affairs, discussed the university's position on free speech and first amendment rights as they pertain to controversial speakers. While the term "controversial" is hard to define, it is generally used to describe a speaker whose views are not widely held or who shares ideas that are actively hateful or hurtful to a population. Danny shared that, as a public university, Penn State's adherence to the First Amendment is critical for ensuring free speech for everyone. Free speech protections also apply to staff who may wish to speak out against hateful speech and rhetoric or join or organize programs that run counter to the controversial speaker.

Tabitha Oman, Living our Values Survey Update

Tabitha Oman, who was recently appointed to the position of vice president and general counsel after serving as Penn State's chief ethics and compliance officer, shared a few updates with USAC. As members of the Penn State community, all staff members are encouraged to report potential issues and concerns regarding actions that are inconsistent with Penn State Values. She reminded members that annual compliance training is coming in the spring. If staff are unclear if a situation or issue qualifies as reportable, staff are encouraged to leave that decision to the investigators and file a report by visiting <https://universityethics.psu.edu/reporting-at-penn-state>. Tabitha highlighted that units and campuses will share the results of the [Living our Values Survey](#) with their faculty, staff, and students later this semester.

Committee Updates

- Communications: Committee members are looking into ways to more effectively use social media to highlight staff throughout the year. The committee also completed the [August monthly brief](#) and a [press release on the USAC Annual Report](#).
- Membership and Elections: Committee members discussed ways USAC can best represent the views and issues that are top-of-mind for staff across the university and how to establish a closer working relationship with Faculty Senate. This topic was further discussed in a special USAC General Council meeting on September 12.
- Outreach: Staff on this committee are planning to engage Staff Advisory Committees via travel meetings to several campuses and units, including Penn State Beaver, the College of Medicine, and World Campus.

Little known facts or benefits: [Health Advocate](#)

Penn State Health Advocate offers two valuable services:

EAP+Work/Life - The [EAP+Work/Life website](#) has all the tools, tips, and resources you need to support your mental, emotional, physical, and financial well-being!

Healthcare Help - Employees have unlimited access to a highly trained Personal Health Advocate (PHA), who can help you navigate the healthcare and insurance systems.

Learn more by contacting Health Advocate at 1-866-799-2728 or visit their [website](#).

Actions and reminders

- The USAC Outreach Committee is inviting all interested staff from the University Park, Carlisle (Dickinson Law), Harrisburg, York, and Mont Alto campuses to join USAC for a travel meeting to the College of Medicine in Hershey on November 2 from 10 am to 2 pm. [Register here](#).
- Penn State's 2024 Benefits Open Enrollment starts Monday, November 6 and runs through 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, November 17. Read the recent article in [Penn State Today](#) and visit the [open enrollment website](#) to learn about the changes for 2024.
- Penn Staters are encouraged to sign up for [Advocate Penn State](#).
- All who are affiliated with the university are encouraged to review information on [how to identify and prevent the spread](#) of spotted lanternflies.
- Penn State employees are encouraged to get the flu vaccine; however, due to increased hybrid and remote-work provisions, the University will not offer specific campus-based flu shot clinics this season. More information on vaccination can be found on the [HR website](#).
- The Penn State community is encouraged to report potential issues about behavior that is inconsistent with the [Penn State Values](#). A 24/7 [Penn State Hotline](#) is available or call 800-560-1637.

Next Council meeting

The October USAC general council meeting is on Tuesday, October 10th, 2023.

University-wide committee involvement and staff opportunities available

USAC officers and members sit on a variety of external committees, which can be found on the [USAC Impact page](#).

Valuable links

- Show a colleague how much you appreciate their efforts with a [Positive Paw](#)
- Recognize a fellow Penn Stater by submitting a "[WE ARE](#)" shout out in Penn State Today
- Don't miss important announcements and news from [Penn State Today](#)

What is USAC and Member Benefits

The University Staff Advisory Council consists of dedicated staff who act in an advisory capacity to central administration; explore issues, policies, and practices that impact staff; suggest revisions to policies and new policy initiatives; and advocate for staff welfare and development. USAC serves the PSU president and administration through the vice president of human resources and accepts new members annually.

Contact us: askusac@psu.edu

USAC Website: <https://hr.psu.edu/university-staff-advisory-council>

LIKE us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PSUUSAC/>

Connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#)