University of Rochester

GENESEE STAFF COUNCIL

2025-2026

ANNUAL REPORT



LISTENING TO STAFF. ELEVATING VOICES. ADVANCING CHANGE.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS



YOUR 2025-26 CO-CHAIRS

Rachel Bills, SMD Clinical Sciences
Karen Cera, Laboratory for Laser Energetics
Pictured with President Sarah Mangelsdorf

The Genesee Staff Council (GSC) exists to ensure that staff perspectives are heard, represented, and considered in the decisions that shape our working lives at the University of Rochester.

During 2025–2026, we focused on strengthening the Council itself while continuing to advocate for improvements across the University. We reorganized our representation to reflect institutional changes, established a more consistent approach to communicating with constituents, and refined how we use staff feedback to identify priorities and engage with leadership.

Our work is grounded in a simple principle: staff should have meaningful opportunities to share their experiences, understand how decisions affect them, and see how their feedback informs institutional conversations. While the Council cannot independently implement University-wide policy or resolve every concern, we can bring staff perspectives forward, ask questions, identify patterns, and advocate for meaningful follow-through.

This report highlights the changes we made to strengthen the Council, the issues staff brought to our attention, the progress made through advocacy and collaboration, and the priorities guiding our work in the year ahead.

We are grateful to the staff members who have shared their experiences, the representatives who volunteer their time, and the University colleagues who have engaged with us throughout the year.

OUR PURPOSE

To ensure staff perspectives are heard, represented, and considered in the decisions that shape our working lives at the University of Rochester.

01 PRIORITIES FOR 2025-2026

1

STRENGTHEN COUNCIL OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Refine the inquiry tracker, clarify expectations for representatives, and develop a Council-wide communication strategy. Make it easier to identify recurring concerns, understand issue status, and communicate progress or barriers.

CLEARER COMMUNICATION & GREATER TRANSPARENCY

2

Advocate for timely, transparent communication from leadership at all levels and improve staff access to clear, responsive HR resources. Continue sharing regular updates on Council priorities, advocacy efforts, and outcomes so staff understand what issues are being raised and what progress is being made.

3

TRAINING, ONBOARDING & WORKPLACE RESOURCES

Promote professional development opportunities and advocate for effective onboarding resources that help new staff feel supported. Raise concerns about gaps in the tools, technology, and infrastructure staff need to perform their work efficiently and effectively.

STAFF WELL-BEING, RECOGNITION & CONNECTION

4

Support initiatives that promote staff well-being and contribute to a positive, inclusive workplace. Gather and elevate staff input on operational and workplace improvements, and coordinate across subcommittees to address morale, engagement, recognition, and the broader campus experience.

LOOKING AHEAD

These priorities will guide the Council's work throughout the coming year. Staff feedback will continue to inform our advocacy, help us identify emerging concerns, and shape the issues we bring forward to University leadership.



02 A STRONGER FOUNDATION

EVOLVING TO REFLECT THE UNIVERSITY

As the University continued to evolve, the GSC updated its district structure to reflect institutional reorganizations and ensure that staff representation remained aligned with the University's organizational landscape.

These changes included the dissolution of the AS&E and Auxiliary Union districts and the addition of the Academic Operations and Services, Central Operations, Hajim, School of Arts and Sciences, and University Student Life districts. Representatives worked to maintain relationships with constituents, reiterate Council's role, and create reliable channels for ongoing communication.

While the Council maintains 45 members as dictated by the Office of Human Resources, the number of districts increased from 15 to 18 for the 2025-2026 academic year.

A MORE FOCUSED COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Council also developed its committee structure to better organize advocacy around recurring staff concerns. Committees provide a way to identify shared challenges, coordinate outreach, and bring related concerns to University leadership.

- **Executive Committee** — coordinates Council priorities, supports representatives, and maintains alignment across districts and committees.
- **Communication** — focuses on transparent, timely communication and stronger connections between staff, representatives, and leadership.
- **Internal Affairs** — ensures the council functions effectively, transparently, and in accordance with established governance standards.
- **Training & Resources** — addresses onboarding, professional development, workplace tools, and resources staff need to succeed.
- **Employee Relations & Morale** — focuses on recognition, belonging, cross-departmental connections, and the employee experience.

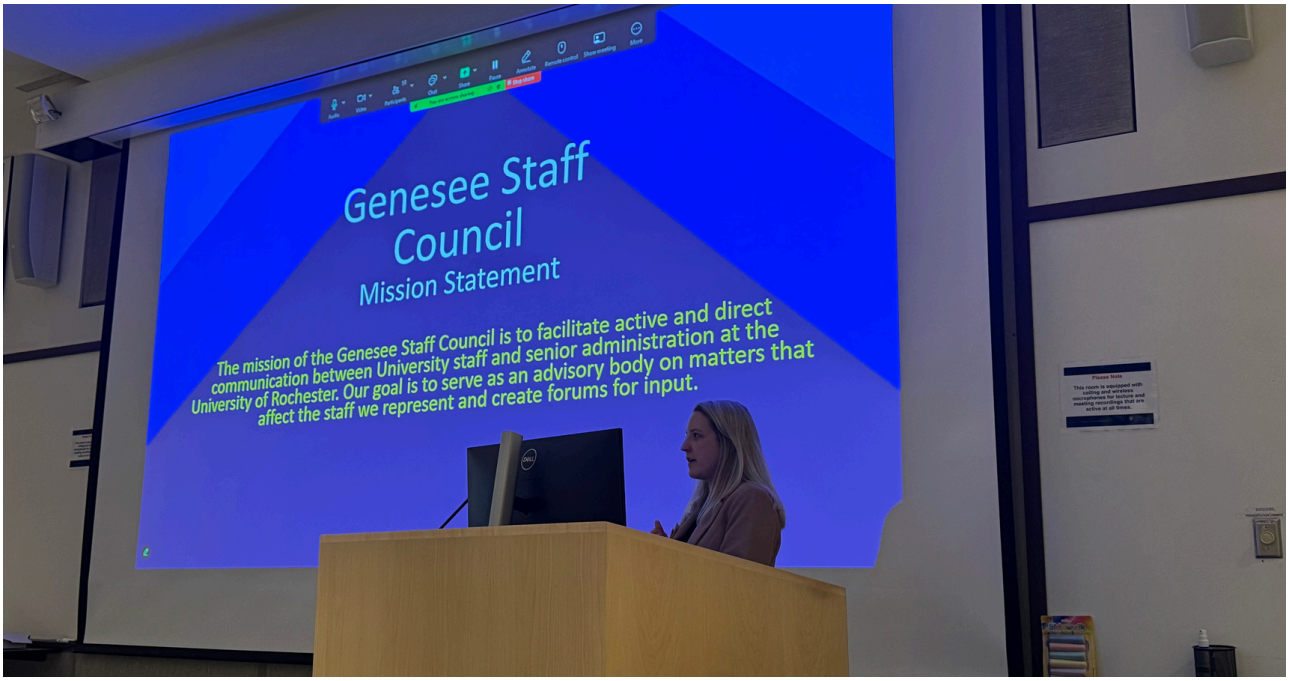
USING STAFF FEEDBACK TO GUIDE OUR WORK

Since Fall 2024, the GSC has maintained a centralized database of constituent inquiries and feedback. This information helps representatives look beyond individual concerns to identify recurring issues that affect staff across departments.

- Transparency and communication: clearer information about policies, institutional changes, and University initiatives.
- Workplace resources and development: more consistent onboarding, accessible training, professional development, and effective workplace systems.
- Recognition and connection: meaningful appreciation, stronger relationships across departments, and a supportive employee experience.
- Representation and accountability: greater staff participation in institutional decision-making and visible follow-through on staff concerns.

During the 2025-2026 academic year, we logged 94 inquires across 12 districts.

Our most engaged districts this year were Academics Operations and Services, River Campus Libraries, and the School of Arts and Sciences.



03 FROM STAFF FEEDBACK TO ADVOCACY

The Council's role is not simply to collect concerns. It is to elevate them, seek engagement with the appropriate decision-makers, and follow progress over time.

EXPANDING STAFF REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING

The GSC continued advocating for staff inclusion in leadership searches, policy discussions, and institutional committees. For approximately four years, two GSC representatives have served as non-voting members of the Faculty Benefits Committee, bringing staff perspectives to discussions about employee benefits while advocating for formal staff representation.

In April 2026, GSC representative Kristi Brock and incoming Faculty Senate Co-Chair Luis Rosario-McCabe presented a proposal to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to revise the committee's name, charge, and structure to formally include staff.

Representatives from River Campus Libraries, SMD, and SAS also participated in executive-level leadership searches, including searches for the Dean of University Libraries, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, and the Dean of the Warner School.

We also have designated representatives on the University Management Team and Public Safety Committee.

CREATING MORE FORMAL CHANNELS FOR STAFF INPUT

In the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), GSC advocacy contributed to several developments intended to strengthen communication and staff participation. The Dean's Office established a Staff Advisory Board, and GSC representatives participated in a focus group examining onboarding practices and opportunities for a more coordinated school-wide orientation program.

The SAS Dean's Office also reinstated regular all-staff meetings, providing a recurring opportunity for updates and staff engagement. The School also began a search for a Senior Staff Engagement and Development Specialist to support staff engagement and process improvement.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO POLICIES AND WORKPLACE INFORMATION

Staff have raised recurring concerns about finding timely, understandable information about University policies and procedures. The GSC continues to advocate for a River Campus resource modeled on the Medical Center's Policy Stat to improve communication when policies are introduced or updated.

Representatives also elevated concerns about HR information, onboarding, professional development, and workplace systems. In SAS and University IT, district advocacy included work to map onboarding and offboarding workflows, identify decentralized processes, and outline potential next steps for leadership.



WHY IT MATTERS

Reliable channels for communication and participation help leadership understand how decisions affect employees and give staff clearer ways to contribute their experience and expertise.

ADVANCING RECOGNITION, BELONGING, AND STAFF SUPPORT

Through the Employee Relations & Morale Committee, the GSC worked with Human Resources leadership to identify opportunities to improve awareness and usability of the UR Stars recognition program. Discussions highlighted opportunities for clearer communication and a simpler submission process, and the Council began planning additional outreach.

In SAS, advocacy also contributed to new staff recognition awards that include professional development funding, connecting recognition of staff contributions with tangible support for continued learning and career growth.

EXAMINING PARKING ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

The GSC initiated collaboration with Parking & Transportation to better understand barriers affecting staff access and affordability. Planned next steps included summarizing findings and identifying feasible improvements related to access, communication, signage, and awareness of available resources.
River Campus Libraries representatives continue to advocate for free or lower-cost accessible parking options for staff who need them, including a review of protocols that may create barriers to obtaining accessible accommodations.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT FOCUS GROUP

The GSC convened a focus group in response to an uptick in feedback from across the University about student employment. The group sought to better understand barriers affecting staff, met with Student Employment Office (SEO) leaders to share staff feedback and explore shared challenges related to student employment practices, and offered suggestions for updating the SEO's digital resources to better support staff. This work will continue into the coming year as the Council builds on these conversations.

04 LOCAL ADVOCACY

University-wide advocacy is only part of the Council's work. District representatives build relationships, surface local concerns, and help staff navigate available resources and decision-making channels.

ADVANCEMENT
CONNECTING NEW STAFF TO THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

Advancement refreshed onboarding materials to introduce new hires to their GSC representatives and available resources. The district also created a dedicated GSC page on the Advancement intranet to share monthly newsletters. Representatives help connect staff with the Council and ensure perspectives can be brought forward.

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

STRENGTHENING STAFF ENGAGEMENT

SAS representatives maintained communication with school leadership about workplace policies and practices, including onboarding, staff-faculty relationships, professional development, manager effectiveness, and follow-through on Employee Experience Survey themes. The reinstatement of All-Staff and State of the School meetings and new recognition awards with professional development funding are tangible examples of a local response.

UNIVERSITY IT

UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE PROCESSES

University IT representatives focused on onboarding and offboarding workflows, using their knowledge of existing systems to map data flows and identify decentralized touchpoints. Employees closest to a process often understand where information gets lost or unnecessary barriers arise; the Council can help bring that expertise into operational discussions.

MEMORIAL ART GALLERY

BUILDING CONNECTIONS ACROSS TEAMS

At MAG, representatives introduced cross-departmental roundtables that bring together one staff member from each area for informal discussion, feedback, and idea sharing. Quarterly staff luncheons give employees an opportunity to step away from daily responsibilities and connect with colleagues.



UNIVERSITY STUDENT LIFE

ESTABLISHING A NEW DISTRICT

As a new district, University Student Life focused on introducing representatives to constituents and building reliable communication channels. Consistent monthly newsletters helped establish a foundation for ongoing engagement and awareness of GSC activities.

05 CONNECTING WITH STAFF ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

Effective advocacy depends on hearing from the people it is intended to serve. Throughout the year, GSC representatives hosted opportunities for staff to connect, ask questions, and share their experiences.

Activities also included informal gatherings, ice cream socials, and other community-building events. These activities create opportunities for staff to learn about Council initiatives, raise questions, and build relationships with representatives.



15 Town Halls



14 Meet & Greets



A MORE CONSISTENT NEWSLETTER FOR EVERY DISTRICT

One of the Council's most significant operational changes was the introduction of a standardized monthly newsletter format across districts. The Council developed a shared approach intended to ensure that constituents receive consistent updates on GSC work, University developments, and opportunities to engage.

The newsletter is more than a summary of Council meetings. It provides a way to explain the issues representatives are raising, share progress where available, clarify what remains unresolved, and invite staff to participate. A common format also supports consistent communication while allowing districts to highlight local issues.

HELPING STAFF MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Ahead of Council elections, we hosted two Q&A sessions attended by approximately 60 people. The sessions focused on Council member expectations, responsibilities, and the work involved in serving as a representative. By providing prospective candidates and nominees with an opportunity to learn more about the role, we aimed to help staff make informed decisions about whether to run for a seat or accept a nomination.

06 STRENGTHENING THE COUNCIL

University-wide advocacy is only part of the Council's work. District representatives build relationships, surface local concerns, and help staff navigate available resources and decision-making channels.

ESTABLISHING SHARED GOALS AND REGULAR CHECK-INS

The Executive Committee supported committees and districts in developing SMART goals—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound bjectives. Committee Co-Chairs also began providing regular updates to the Executive Committee, creating opportunities to share progress, identify barriers, coordinate related work, and seek guidance.

MAKING PARTICIPATION MORE SUSTAINABLE

Serving on the GSC requires staff to balance Council responsibilities with their regular jobs. To support participation, the Council introduced more working time during full-council meetings, expanded professional development through speakers and training, and created opportunities for representatives to connect with one another.

DEVELOPING MORE CONSISTENT PRACTICES

The centralized inquiry tracker remains an important tool for the GSC's advocacy work. This year, we convened a focus group to improve the database and clarify how feedback is reviewed, categorized, and brought forward for consideration. These refinements will help the Council identify recurring themes, recognize emerging concerns, and determine which issues may warrant broader advocacy or follow-up with University leadership.

WHY IT MATTERS

Strong internal processes do not guarantee institutional change, but they can help the Council identify concerns, coordinate its response, communicate progress, and follow up with leadership.

07 YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

The GSC's work is made possible by staff members who volunteer their time to listen to colleagues, share information, participate in Council activities, and advocate for improvements to the workplace.

Council leadership

Co-Chairs

- **Rachel Bills,** SMD Clinical Sciences
- **Karen Cera,** Laboratory for Laser Energetics

Executive Committee

- **Melinda Adelman,** School of Arts and Sciences
- **Kristi Brock,** University Student Life, former Co-Chair
- **Christina Cretelle**, SMD Clinical Sciences
- **Jennie Gilardoni,** School of Arts and Sciences
- **Claudia Pietrzak,** River Campus Libraries
- **Marc Siegfred**, Parliamentarian, ex-officio
- **Julia Scheele,** Human Resources, ex-officio
- **Donna Winters-Head,** GSC Administrative Coordinator, ex-officio

District representatives and committee membership

- **Mary Beth Kitzel,** Academic Operations and Services, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Scott Sheehan**, Academic Operations and Services, Communications Committee
- **Amanda Sharpe,** Academic Operations and Services, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Emily Lake**, Advancement, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Ashley Smith**, Advancement, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Sara Klinkbeil,** Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Communications Committee
- **Sandra Burch-Worth,** Central Finance & Administration, Communications Committee
- **Amy Kadrie,** Central Finance & Administration, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **Denise Logory,** Central Finance & Administration, Training & Resources Committee
- **Scott Fearing,** Central Finance & Administration, Training & Resources Committee
- **James Palermo,** Central Operations, Training & Resources Committee
- Charles LaBrake, Central Operations, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- Yohana Rivero, Central Operations, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- Emily Russell, Central Operations, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Kirk Simpson,** Central Operations, Training & Resources Committee
- **Shamika Wilson,** Central Operations, Training & Resources Committee
- **Annalisa Newbauer,** Eastman School of Music, Training & Resources Committee
- **Catherine Carofanello**, Laboratory for Laser Energetics, Training & Resources Committee
- **Hannah McClow,** Laboratory for Laser Energetics, Training & Resources Committee
- **Caryn Feinstein,** Memorial Art Gallery, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **David Lanni,** School of Nursing, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **Daniela Alaniz**, Simon School of Business, Training & Resources Committee
- **Katie Libby,** SMD Admin, Communications Committee
- **Jamie Brown,** SMD Basic Sciences, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **Terri Jakubowski,** SMD Basic Sciences, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **Michelle Mazor,** SMD Basic Sciences, Communications Committee
- **Chennel Anderson,** SMD Clinical Sciences, Communications Committee
- **Maria Fagnano,** SMD Clinical Sciences, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **Shari Hofmann,** SMD Clinical Sciences, Training & Resources Committee
- **Anthony Minervino,** SMD Clinical Sciences, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Lorie Wolfanger,** SMD Clinical Sciences, Communications Committee
- **Kari Steinmetz,** SMD Clinical Sciences, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **Jessica Syposs,** SMD Clinical Sciences, Employee Relations and Morale Committee
- **Palaniappan Muthukumarasamy,** University IT, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Mike Gruszewski,** University IT, Internal Affairs Committee
- **Greg Morin,** University IT, Training & Resources Committee
- **Tacarah Reyes**, University Student Life, Communications Committee
- **Joe Williams, Jr.,** University Student Life Internal Affairs Committee
- **Francesca Chaba**, Warner School of Education, Employee Relations and Morale Committee

LOOKING AHEAD

The GSC's progress is measured not only by the number of meetings held or initiatives launched, but by its ability to make staff perspectives more visible and help move important conversations forward. During 2025–2026, we strengthened our internal structure, established more consistent communication practices, created additional opportunities for staff engagement, and advanced advocacy on representation, workplace resources, recognition, and accessibility.



There is more work to do. Some initiatives have produced tangible changes; others remain proposals, ongoing conversations, or areas where the Council is seeking a clearer response from leadership. We are committed to communicating those distinctions honestly and continuing to elevate the issues that matter to staff.

A stronger University community depends on listening to the people who make its work possible. We look forward to continuing that work together.

GENESEE STAFF COUNCIL
UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

GET INVOLVED



Staff can contact their district representative, respond to newsletter invitations, attend town halls and meet-and-greets, and share workplace questions or concerns by emailing GSC@rochester.edu or submitting feedback anonymously on our website.