Engineering Staff Advisory Council (ESAC)
Activities Report, FY 2018-2019
Prepared by President Blake Rupe and Vice-President/President Elect Rachel Marek

The following report is a summary of the ESAC activities by committee for fiscal year 2018-2019 organized by 1. Standing Committees, 2. Ad-hoc Committees, and 3. A Look Ahead to FY20. Over this productive year the council sought to enhance long-running activities and to add new endeavors in order to best fulfill our mission to represent, promote, and give back to the College of Engineering staff.

1. STANDING COMMITTEES

Perpetual committees where membership is determined at the beginning of every operational year

Executive Committee: Blake Rupe (President), Rachel Marek (Vice-President), Dawn Marshall (Secretary), Jacob Heiden (Treasurer), and Ashlee Johannes (councilor at-large)

The Executive Committee fulfilled the council goal to represent staff interests to College administration by organizing two lunch hour Q&A sessions with Dean Alec Scranton. The fall session was held on October 25, 2018 and the spring session was held on March 29, 2019. Upon recommendation from the previous year’s ESAC, the Executive Committee worked with Engineering Computer Services to enable remote attendance via videoconferencing for staff at the National Advanced Driving Simulator conference room in University of Iowa Research Park. Seventeen people attended the fall meeting at the Seamans Center, and another eight joined remotely from NADS. Fifteen people attended the spring meeting at the Seamans Center, and six joined remotely from NADS. Notes from each meeting were published on the ESAC website for all interested staff. Feedback from attendees was largely positive, yet a few individuals thought some responses were not specific enough. ESAC plans to continue to organize Q&A sessions with Dean Scranton each semester and will continue to provide an online meeting option for staff to join remotely.

The Executive Committee also held two meetings with Dean Scranton. The fall semester meeting took place on October 24, 2018 and the spring semester meeting was conducted on February 28, 2019. Constituent issues such as a new breakroom and building cleanliness were compiled and reported to the Dean during these meetings.

We worked with the college administration to address staff concerns over the recent loss of the staff breakroom in SC. In the previous year our breakroom in the SC basement was traded to FM in exchange for the SC second floor recycling room that was then converted to a kitchenette. However, staff expressed concerns over losing the one space where we could remove ourselves from the general building population, especially those staff who work in shared offices. ESAC and Dean Scranton agreed that the 4th floor kitchen annex would be a good location to try as the new breakroom. The room has keycard access granted to CoE faculty, staff, and SWD graduate students. ESAC-requested upgrades such as more seating, dish soap, paper towels, plates, and cutlery were implemented by Building Manager John Millsap.

After hearing several constituent concerns about cleanliness of the Seamans Center we brought the topic to Dean Scranton. In response, Dean Scranton hosted a brief meeting with Custodial Services Associate Director Andy Bruckner and ESAC VP Rachel Marek to broadly discuss custodial services that are provided to the college. Rachel and ESAC President Blake Rupe also met with EFC President Charlie Stanier who agreed that this is an issue on which ESAC and EFC should work together because both faculty and staff are affected. A follow-up meeting with a larger number of stakeholders from FM and the college was then held and included ESAC VP Rachel Marek and ESAC Treasurer Jacob Heiden, Dean Scranton, Financial Director April Tippett, and EFC President Charlie Stanier from College of Engineering.
During these meetings Andy Bruckner noted that all requests of whatever size whether urgent or not can go through FM@YourService and that Facilities Management will not charge fees for one-off services; if there is a recurring custodial need an estimate will be prepared and discussed with the college. Andy also told us that the number of custodians in the Seamans Center are assigned based on our cleanable square footage rather than building usage (foot traffic) and does not include offices. The SC is serviced by a few custodians who work the evening shift and one custodian who works a part-time day shift. One main concern with the current custodial arrangement in SC is that most SC custodians work during the highest traffic times and custodians are not allowed to clean a space when it is in use. Another concern is that facilities to be used during prospective student and faculty visits are not always presentable and how to get that resolved as soon as possible. A third concern is that staff and students suspect certain facilities in SC are not always cleaned when we expect them to be, but we are unsure of the current cleaning schedule in the building. Facilities Management is preparing a level of service document that was expected to be released in draft form to the college by the end of the spring semester, but we are still waiting on this before being able to address all of the concerns regarding SC cleanliness in a more targeted way.

The Executive Committee fulfilled the request from College leadership to recommend staff members to fill the at-large position on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council. Recommendations were solicited from all College staff, and three individuals were nominated. The nominee selected to serve and represent staff was Josh Atcher, who has provided consistent reports and updates to ESAC about the Council.

The Executive Committee fulfilled the request from Interim Executive VP and Provost Sue Curry to recommend four staff members to represent research and administrative staff on the College’s search committee for a new Dean. Out of the four individuals we nominated, the two nominees selected by Sue Curry to serve on the committee were April Tippett and Troy Lyons.

The Executive Committee compiled anonymous staff comments and questions received through the ESAC website on the College of Engineering Strategic Plan. ESAC also compiled our own recommended edits specific to addition of staff in several places in the document. We submitted these suggestions to Dean Scranton. ESAC’s recommendations were accepted by Dean Scranton and approved by EFC (Engineering Faculty Council).

**Elections Committee**: Rachel Marek (Chair), Jacob Heiden, Blake Rupe

The Committee drafted and submitted a proposal to UI Staff Council for staff appreciation gifts. The proposal was granted, and the Committee obtained $500 supplemental funds for staff appreciation gifts to purchase gifts. Taking into account feedback from the previous year’s staff appreciation that a healthy snack and a more permanent item than food would be appreciated, the committee purchased pint glasses, healthy treats, and coasters with ESAC logos. All ESAC councilors participated in delivering gift packages on April 30 to all 172 of our constituents to thank them for their service to the college and to give constituents the chance to share questions and concerns. We reached nearly all College of Engineering staff in the 10 buildings where they sit.

This personal contact was also used to solicit nominations for the next council. Although many nominations were received, only two councilors accepted nominations to run for four open seats on ESAC. Reasons for rejecting nominations included concern over the amount of time required and, particularly with staff in SHL, lack of interest. The election for FY2020-2021 councilor seats was hosted by UI Staff Council Vice President Mike Weaver and held from May 29 to June 5, 2019. Dawn Marshall, Research Manager at NADS, was re-elected to a two-year term and Sarah Livesay, Assistant Director of the Hanson Center for Technical Communication was elected to a two-year term. Although her nomination was received after the nomination period had closed, per our bylaws we recommended
Katie Schnedler to the Executive Committee to fill one of the councilor vacancies until the next ESAC election in spring 2020.

**Staff Award Evaluation Committee:** Blake Rupe (Chair), Rachel Marek, Kristina Venzke, Andres Martinez (staff at-large), Brandon Barquist (staff at-large), Sean Hessler, Director of Learning and Development (external evaluator)

The committee reviewed many excellent nominations, and after careful deliberation recommended Mary Bender, Director of Finance and Business Operations at NADS, for the Mary Sheedy Staff Excellence Award; Tony Loeser, Water Resources Engineer at IIHR, for the Staff Community Engagement Award; and Nathan Young, Research Engineer at IIHR, for the Staff Research Award. Dean Scranton accepted our recommendations, and we had the pleasure of watching these three outstanding staff receive their awards at the College of Engineering Faculty & Staff Recognition Ceremony on April 18, 2019. This is the first year, after two years without a nomination, that we were able to award the Staff Community Engagement Award.

**By-Laws, Policies and Procedures Committee:** Dawn Marshall (Chair), Rachel Marek

The Bylaws, Policies and Procedures committee proposed several revisions to the ESAC bylaws including clarifying how to fill council vacancies and how to fill officer positions in the event an officer resigns from ESAC or leaves the College of Engineering. The revisions were passed unanimously by members of ESAC during the April 2019 meeting.

2. **AD-HOC COMMITTEES**

*Dissolved at the end of each operational year and reconstituted according to council interests*

**Wellness:** Ashlee Johannes (Chair July-February), Rachel Marek (Chair March-June), Chris Schwarz, April Tippett (staff at-large), Jenni Rumping (staff at-large), and Sarah Lobb (staff at-large)

The Wellness Committee was formed for FY19 to create and promote more wellness options for College of Engineering staff. The Committee created an electronic wellness survey for College of Engineering staff to gauge interest in wellness grant ideas, which received a response from 75 of 172 staff. Using this information we wrote and submitted a proposal to UI Wellness and were awarded a $338 Wellness Grant to purchase two desk cycles for any College of Engineering staff to use in SC. The Committee applied to the College Space Planning Committee and was granted storage space next to the Lichtenberger Library with a physical key to check out from the library. We worked with Engineering Computer Services to create a reservation calendar and with College of Engineering HR, the UI ergonomics expert, and UI Risk Management to minimize risk and provide first injury report information for staff who wish to use the desk cycles. To improve the initiative, the Committee worked with UI Wellness to offer additional information on exercise during the workday. We expect to launch the desk cycles program college-wide at the beginning of the next FY. Dean Scranton has agreed to highlight this initiative and encourage staff and supervisors to provide feedback.

The Committee also co-sponsored, alongside College of Engineering HR, a Learning@Lunch on resilience by Maggie Moore from the UI Employee Assistance Program.
Publicity: Jacob Heiden (Chair), Ashlee Johannes, Blake Rupe, and Rachel Marek

This committee was formed for FY19 to promote operations by maintaining active communication outlets and increasing staff involvement. We maintained ESAC communication with college staff through emails, the ESAC website, and our web-based anonymous suggestion box. To improve communication with leadership, we helped coordinate online Zoom meetings for the Q&A sessions with college administration so staff could attend remotely. We also distributed 20 participation and raffle prizes with the College of Engineering logo, donated by college HR, Alumni Relations, and Associate Dean Grosland, at ESAC sponsored events. Additionally, we distributed welcome cards to staff joining the college and goodbye cards to staff leaving. These cards share ESAC information with new hires and thank departures for their service to the College of Engineering.

Get to Know the College: Kristina Venzke (Chair), Chris Schwarz, Jacob Heiden, and Dawn Marshall

This committee was formed to increase awareness of, and showcase the efforts of, the College of Engineering’s many people, projects, and centers across all locations on campus. We organized four events for FY19. We hosted a NADS Open House and facility tour event for six people in August 2018. Over 20 staff attended our Fall Staff Happy Hour in September 2018. In November 2018 we hosted an introduction to NEXUS space and projects which was attended by 21 staff. Over 20 staff attended our Spring Staff Happy Hour in May 2019 at Mellow Mushroom. The Committee intended to plan another event in the spring of 2019, but this event was abandoned due to scheduling difficulties low response rate from lab and organization leaders.

Social Events: Blake Rupe (Chair), Brian Snider, Jacob Heiden, April Tippett (staff at-large),

The committee hosted three events to encourage community building and networking and to increase the visibility of ESAC so that staff are aware of their representation. We held a Halloween costume contest and spooky snack party on October 31 for approximately 20 staff. Prize packs were awarded to the two winners of the costume contest. Waste from the party was diverted through recycling and composting options.

We held a holiday feast for approximately 54 staff and faculty on December 7. The number of RSVPs (24) was much lower compared to the actual number in attendance which should be considered for future budget and planning. The PowerPoint summary of ESAC activities presented at the luncheon was well-received, but at future events it was suggested that the presentation occur in the first 15-20 minutes of the event to ensure that attendees who can only take a 30 minute lunch break have the opportunity to see the presentation. Attendees were excited for the prize drawing that was held for 15 College of Engineering logo gifts. We used compostable tableware purchased by ESAC, and all waste except butter packets was diverted to compost. We removed the compost to the IMU loading dock.

We held a chili cookoff on March 15 that featured 5 soups and was attended by 25 staff. Brian Snider, Laboratory Manager in the Engineering Electronics Shop, won the coveted Golden Ladle award for best chili. The Sustainability Committee provided recycling and compost stations.

We also planned a summer grill-out for July 2 of the new FY. The event will be held on the John Deere Plaza and will feature grilled burgers, veggie burgers, and hot dogs along with drinks and sides. We anticipate about 20 attendees.
Community Service: Ashlee Johannes (Chair), Blake Rupe, Chris Schwarz, Kristina Venzke, Jan Waterhouse (staff at-large)

The committee coordinated the annual College of Engineering participation in the United Way Adopt-A-Family for the holidays program in November-December 2018. Participants in the college raised enough funds to provide two families with every item on their request list plus a $200 gift card to Hy Vee for groceries. The committee also coordinated a February “Spread the Love” food campaign and collected over 100 pounds of food, household items, and family supplies for the Johnson County Crisis Center.

Sustainability Committee: Blake Rupe (Chair), Rachel Marek, Brian Snider, Sarah Livesay (staff at-large), Natalie Potter (staff at-large)

The work of this committee has helped make the College of Engineering a campus leader in sustainability initiatives.

Tiny Trash: We acted in an advisory role to Office of Sustainability and UI Facilities Maintenance in planning for a Tiny Trash roll out in the SC. The Tiny Trash is a small, washable, lidded bin that attaches to the side of a small recycling bin. The custodians placed one set of bins at each desk and removed the regular desk trash cans; a total of 365 bin pairs were placed. Participants are responsible for emptying their trash and recycling into the hallway bins. This arrangement encourages positive recycling behavior by making recycling as easy and convenient as landfilling. It also allows custodians to focus on other areas of the building rather than emptying desk side trash, and FM saves money on trash can liners.

Packing Materials Re-use Program: We maintained a packing materials re-use program that was started the previous FY in partnership with a local small business that supports the university’s goal of 60% waste diversion by 2020. Packing materials are collected on 4th floor SC using bins from Office of Sustainability. The Sustainability Committee is assisting in the creation of a similar station in HWTA. Packing material stations are also located in ERF, NADS, and SHL. Staff, faculty, and students who work in these buildings are free to add or use packing materials in three categories: bubble wrap, air pockets, and packing peanuts. When bins are full the packing materials are picked up by Mailboxes of Iowa City, at no cost to College of Engineering, for re-use. This program collected 94 cubic feet of packing materials for re-use in FY19 and 211 cubic feet over the lifetime of the program. ESAC inspired a Tippie College of Business student to start their own program.

Compostable Waste Collection Program: We maintained a compostable waste collection program in SC, SHL, and NADS that was piloted for three months during the previous FY. The program faced a budget cut and so reduced services by eliminating July collection and reducing the number of buckets collected from ten to seven based on the lower weight of compostable materials collected in three offices. Despite dropping three offices, the weight of compostable materials collected over the past year has increased. However, interrupting service for one month was confusing to participants, so going forward we recommend continuing composting for the full 12 months. This program now serves approximately 99 staff, faculty, and students in SC, NADs, and SHL with twice weekly pickup. At the request of the students she works with, Sarah Livesay, the Assistant Director of the Hanson Center for Technical Communication and a new at-large committee member, adopted one ESAC-owned bucket with ESAC-provided bags and signage for the Hanson Center. She brings her office’s bag of compostable waste to the administration suite’s compost once or twice a week as needed. We worked with each requesting office to customize signs and communication to the regular users. A total of 1089 pounds of compost have been picked up in FY19 August-June, which is roughly one pound per month per participant.
This program continues to exhibit the College of Engineering’s leadership and commitment toward the university’s 60% waste diversion by 2020 goal. Tippie College of Business’ staff council has inquired with ESAC on how to start their own program. We also counseled one of the College of Medicine’s Learning Communities on how to start their own program.

At the request of Dean Scranton we researched the arrangements and costs of other units on campus for collecting compostable waste. According to the Office of Sustainability, the only other compostable waste collections on campus are at some of the dormitories and dining halls. Compostable waste pick-ups occur at the IMU and the Burge, Hillcrest, and Catlett dormitories on Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays. UI Catering pays $1,140 for one week of collection ($95 per pick-up x 3 pick-ups per week x 4 locations). Johnson County Refuse (JCR) collects the compost from the loading docks; employees are responsible for taking out the compost from inside the buildings. The dining halls generate more compost and are paying much more than the College of Engineering to have it picked up.

We currently pay $225 per month to EcoCare Compost Ninja for pick-up of 7 buckets at three buildings (SC, NADS, SHL) two times a week. An advantage of our arrangement with EcoCare is they pick the buckets up from each office without additional work for College of Engineering employees. The arrangement used by UI Catering is much more expensive and requires greater employee effort. We don’t generate enough volume, so contracting with JCR would be impractical. However, we have added our compostable waste to the JCR compostable waste collection bins for big events in the past because we purchase compostable tableware from IMU Catering and then use their compost disposal services at the IMU loading dock. We will continue to use their services when appropriate, but it is not reasonable to apply a similar model at College of Engineering unless we start collecting much more compostable waste.

**Recycling partnership with Mayor’s Youth Empowerment Program:** Young adult volunteers, supervised by MYEP staff, use grabbing tools to remove trash from recycling bins throughout the SC to improve the landfill diversion rate. Their efforts help because bins of recycling that are excessively contaminated with trash are dumped directly into the landfill dumpster rather than into the recycling dumpster. The volunteers benefit by being part of our campus environment and gain experience for their resumes. One MYEP volunteer was hired into a paid position in the community with the help of her volunteer experience with our program. The volunteers bring additional diversity into our college, and both the college and volunteers benefit from interactions with one another. We received supplementary funds from College of Engineering administration to purchase grabbing tools and “Recycle Team” logo hats that the volunteers wear as uniforms. At the end of FY19 ESAC replaced broken grabbers and purchased disposable gloves for the team to wear. The hats, grabbers, gloves, and a tally counter are now kept in the 3rd floor galley kitchen with key card access granted to the MYEP staff. MYEP volunteers removed 999 landfill items from recycling over 28 visits January-June; their volunteer work began June 2018, but they didn’t start using a clicker to quantify their impact until January 2019. Demonstrating College of Engineering’s mission to be leaders on campus, we are the first university group to partner with MYEP, and we expect this collaboration to improve SC’s waste diversion efforts in support of the university’s 60% waste diversion by 2020 goal. Tippie College of Business’ Staff Council has inquired with ESAC and MYEP on how to start their own program. For FY20 the group is considering expanding operations to include the annex bins but are waiting to decide until they hear about staffing and number of interested volunteers.

### 3. A LOOK AHEAD TO FY20

The Engineering Staff Advisory Council requested $9,495 for FY20. This request included funds to support councilors on billable hours, continue composting in the College throughout the year, and maintain the anticipated ESAC activities designed for staff (Table 1).

While this request is slightly larger than FY19, over 75% of our funding will be used on councilor billable hours and composting -- two initiatives we have identified as important to ESAC, staff, and the
College of Engineering. Being able to offer our councilors on billable hours the funds to cover their regular meeting attendance allows any staff in the College of Engineering to participate in shared governance. ESAC manages the composting program used by approximately 100 staff, faculty, and students.

Table 1. Funding requested for FY20.

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<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Councilor Billable Hours</td>
<td>$4480</td>
<td>In the spring of 2019, ESAC received $2240 to support 5 councilors for 6 months. We doubled the approved amount for FY20 to support 12 months.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composting</td>
<td>$2700</td>
<td>$225 per month for 12 months of compost pickup at seven CoE sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESAC Activities</td>
<td>$2315</td>
<td>These funds will be used to maintain expected ESAC activities including staff appreciation day, holiday feasts and cook-offs/cookouts, after-work socials, and other initiatives of staff interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$9495</td>
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In FY19 ESAC received supplemental funding from the UISC Staff Appreciation Grant for $500 and a Wellness Grant for $338. We will continue to actively seek other sources of funding to further our impact in the College of Engineering and community.

For FY20, ESAC received a GEF allocation of $7,500. ESAC plans to focus on improving communication with staff in the college and building cleanliness while continuing to organize compostable waste collection, packing materials re-use, and recycling sorting with MYEP; during and after work get to know the college and wellness events; and opportunities to engage with our community.