UTHealth University Classified Staff Council 2017-2018

Pictured here are members of the University Classified Staff Council for 2017-2018.

2017-2018 Officers
Jean Grove, Chair
Alainna Talton, Chair-Elect
Melissa Wuennenberg, Secretary
Verlincia Williams, Treasurer
William Severson, Parliamentarian

University Classified Staff Council Mission

The mission of University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) University Classified Staff Council (UCSC) is to advise the President and the university leadership on behalf of the classified staff.

The council advises by way of making recommendations on existing and proposed policies, procedures and programs that impact or are of particular interest to the classified staff; as well as voicing any questions or concerns the classified staff may have.

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As we come to the close of FY 2018 I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the current UCSC members for their incredible work, and achievements during this past year. Although Hurricane Harvey impacted some of our fall activities we were able to partner with the Student InterCouncil and the Environmental Health and Safety department to put on the “Stop the Bleed” event at Cooley Center where 12 of our members not only participated, but assisted in putting together “Stop the Bleed” kits that are now located alongside all the defibrillators in our buildings. Council members also assisted at FunFest this past fall.

The Spring saw our first ever Educational Awards Drive where, under the Committee leadership of Koko Taylor, we raised over $31,000 for Educational Awards. These awards were given to 13 students and ranged in amounts from $1,000 to $5,000. These students are all beginning their college careers this fall at universities across Texas and the United States.

We also held our Annual UCSC Workshop which took place on June 27th at the Cooley Center. This event, coordinated by the Employee Recognition Committee chaired by Nicholas Bisase, drew over 225 registrants and was also made available by live feed to employees who were unable to attend in person. The Work/Life Balance theme was well received and our presenters did a great job of giving participants tips/techniques for achieving that balance as well as motivation to implement those into our daily routines.

Our Communications Committee, chaired by Colin Dunham, has done an outstanding job of updating the UCSC website, responding to all inquiries that come through the UCSC mailbox and publishing timely and informative newsletters. This has given the Council a tremendous amount of visibility and has helped us to promote our actions and activities.

As the FY 2018 year draws to a close, we will be welcoming new members and bidding farewell to several outgoing members at our Retreat on August 24 which is put on by the efforts of our Election Committee chaired by Ebony Wolford.

I have been proud to Chair the University Classified Staff Council this year and look forward to continuing my participation on the Council under the leadership of Alainna Talton who is the FY 2019 Chair.
The University Classified Staff Council (UCSC) recently presented $28,000 in educational awards to 13 college-bound dependents of UTHealth classified staff employees. The awards, ranging from $1,000 to $5,000, were a result of generous donations from the university community and executive leadership. The award recipients are:

Eric Dai, son of Jun Ying, Data Manager, McGovern Medical School Center for Clinical Research is described as “a natural leader, a focused and mature student and a great quizbowler and debater.” Eric will attend Case Western.

Alec Furnace, son of Sophia Furnace, Research Coordinator II, Children’s Learning Institute, is described as “not merely an exemplary student, achieving the highest results in the classroom, but an exemplary citizen.” Alec will attend The University of Dallas.

Epstein Jacob, daughter of Litty Thomas, Staff Nurse III, Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center is one who “In addition to Epstein’s exemplary performance in the classroom, I admire her commitment to bettering the local community as well as the world at large.” Epstein will attend The University of Houston.

Adithya Menon, son of Manju Menon, Staff Nurse II, UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center is said to “demonstrate exceptional communication skills and has a unique ability to motivate others toward a common goal.” Adithya will attend The University of Texas, Austin.
Pranav Menon, son of Usha Menon Program Manager, McGovern Medical School, Radiology is described as follows, “His leadership, talent, heart and commitment to excellence hold the promise to his bright future.” Pranav will attend Drexel University.

Malcolm Mitchell-Bennett, son of Lisa Mitchell-Bennett, Project Manager, School of Public Health in Brownsville, Malcolm “passionately feels the public schools can better serve students and he has developed a passion for education reform.” Malcolm will attend Warren Wilson College.

Christy Nguyen, daughter of My Nguyen, Administrative Coordinator McGovern Medical School, Biochemistry, is one who “is a very thoughtful student who helps others and tries to be inclusive to all.” Christy will attend The University of Houston.

Jodie Patcha, daughter of Pinwo Patcha, Staff Nurse II, UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center, is described as a “student leader who takes initiative and who sets the bar high for her goals.” Jodie will attend St. Edwards University with her sister Jessica who was a 2017 Education Awards recipient.

Rachel Ply, daughter of Melissa Ply Program Manager, Children’s Learning Institute, Austin “has been in Girl Scouts since kindergarten and who is a compassionate, smart, organized and overall good person.” Rachel will attend Texas A&M, Kingsville.

Anouska Ramesh, daughter of Kavitha Gopal, Staff Systems Analyst, McGovern Medical School DSRIP Administration “single handedly spearheaded a charity event, Falcons Fight Cancer which raised over $11,000 for St. Jude’s Children Research Hospital.” Anouska will attend The University of North Texas.

Timmie Russel, son of Katenia Grays-Russell, Licensed Vocational Nurse II, Memorial City Ironman Clinic is described as “a team player whose integrity serves as one of his greatest assets.” Timmie will attend Wiley College where he will also play baseball.

Migus Wong, son of See-Long Wong, Nurse Practioner, McGovern Medical School, Orthopedic Surgery, is “extremely self-motivated and takes full responsibility for his own learning. He has a genuine love of science that sets him apart from many of his academically qualified peers.” Migus will attend Colorado School of Mines.

Brain Xu, son of Jianxin Lin, Research Assistant II, McGovern Medical School Neurology, is described “I am confident that with Brian’s gifted mind and his disciplined study habits he will have much success in the future.” Brian will attend The University of Texas, Austin.

Congratulations again and much success to the 2018 UCSC Educational Award recipients!
Rick ‘Rick’ Escamilla has worked with the UT System for over 14 years. Rick started at M. D. Anderson in 2004 and came over to UTHealth in 2008 where he has been ever since. In his current role, Rick is a research coordinator II for the department of surgery at LBJ Hospital.

Rick joined the University Classified Staff Council (UCSC) so that he could help communicate UCSC topics to LBJ employees. “For years we never had anyone at LBJ. I finally joined and realized the topics discussed at the meeting are topics that my coworkers had questions about here at LBJ. I wanted to be their voice.” During his time on the UCSC, Rick has always served on the Staff Development committee. Rick likes being the “go-to guy” and being able to help people solve their problems or providing advice. In fact, he holds a securities license for just such a time. Overall, he believes in the Golden Rule and he tries to set an example for others.

Rick has been married for eight years to his wife Hien-Hoa, and they have three children: Dylan, Patrick, and Lillian. The family also has a pet goldfish that Rick has been able to keep alive for several years! When he is not at work, Rick likes to spend time with his family and watch movies. He also loves to travel and cherishes memories of spending time with his own parents. Aside from work, and family, Rick also serves as the director for his municipal utility district — a role that allows him to focus on community development.
Classified staff members from UTHealth were invited to participate in the University Classified Staff Council’s (UCSC) 24th Annual Workshop this year on Wednesday, June 27, 2018. This year’s theme was assessing your work/life balance with the motto of “KEEP CALM & ____ ON!” Registrants were encouraged to fill in the blank of the workshop motto with an activity that keeps them calm or helps them relax.

Over 150 classified staff employees were able to attend the workshop, which included guest speakers, a vendor fair, and professional development activities. All parts of the workshop were devoted to helping UTHealth employees understand how to measure their work/life balance and make adjustments when aspects become unbalanced.

Robin Dickey, Faculty Assistance Specialist with Employee Assistant Programs, started the morning with her presentation that helped employees identify what their personal work/life balance looks like. The session also taught participants how to identify stress in their lives and the toll that stress can take physiologically on the human body. Robin was able to give participants some helpful tips on changes they can make to help them manage their stress and overall well-being. The session also included a demonstration of relaxation responses to stressors and active participation from the audience.

The following session was a motivational speech provided by Kareem Jackson, Kareem Jackson Ministries, that focused on the theme of “Knowing When Enough is Enough.” Kareem’s session helped classified staff members in attendance recognize when they have too much stress. His presentation included practical advice such as keeping a stress journal, identifying resentment, and taking “me” time to avoid burnout. By using these everyday habits, Kareem encouraged attendees to find their work/life balance and make the most of their time in all areas of their life.
Following lunch, UCSC Chair Jean Grove had the pleasure of helping present the educational awards to children of classified staff members. The educational awards are given annually following an application and selection process. This year, thirteen applicants were selected to receive awards after highlighting their educational prowess and leadership qualities within their applications. Dr. Robert Emery was also at the ceremony to present the awards to the selected winners.

Tony Jackson, Learning and Development Consultant, gave workshop participants insight into how to plan for their own professional development. Tony assisted all attendees in creating their own individual development plan that gives employees insight into their goal and the steps they need to take in order to achieve that goal. Additionally, he spoke about the various online resources and leadership institutes available to UTHealth employees.

The final session of the workshop was a panel discussion with Mr. Kevin Foyle, CFRE, Vice President for Development and Public Affairs, Ms. Sharlene Johnson, MA, LPC-S, LBSW, LCDC, Senior Assessment and Referral Specialist, and Ms. Dennie Clemons, Senior Applications Administrator. These panelists answered questions specifically regarding how they manage a work/life balance at UTHealth, as well as how they promote such a balance within their various operating units. Additionally, the panelists took questions from the audience with recommendations to enable participants to return to their departments with ideas to promote work/life balance in their respective areas.

Throughout the day and following the final session, there were drawings for prizes from the vendors who attended the workshop.
McGovern Medical School’s ERC Annual Office Supply SWAP

McGovern Medical School’s Employee Relations Committee held the 5th Annual Office Supply Swap on July 19, 2018, in the MSB Lobby.

All MMS departments are invited to clean out their office supplies each year to free up space and help staff in other areas by recycling any new or gently used office supplies. Supplies recycled were available on a first-come, first-served basis and everyone was invited to browse items donated by other departments that they can use in their areas.

This tradition has been well received by the staff. Items left at the end of the day are either recycled or sent to surplus.

TODAY’S & POLLOCK joined in by providing information on products and even donated a door prize that all were invited to participate in.
FY 2019 UCSC Elections

The University Classified Staff Council (UCSC) has elections annually in order to elect our new representatives for the upcoming fiscal year. Representatives are elected to a two-year term and serve on one of the five standing committees: Staff Development, Staff Recognition, Communications, Elections, and Educational Awards. This year, the UCSC had enough openings that elections were not necessary given the number of participants that were nominated for the council. We welcome the following new UCSC Representatives as they begin their terms in September and we eagerly await the change they will be a part of in the coming fiscal year.

Akilah Moy
Bethany Roachell
Brenda Adams
Bridget Smalley
Cade Roper
Dana White
Deborah Blesener
Denee Velazquez-Murillo
Felicia Davis
Greg Garcia
Jennifer Torres
Jessica Vanderpool

Jordan Varing
Katrina Bright
Laura Newell
Laura Rademacher
Liz Vinson
Michael Dixon
Orlando Medieta
Rosa Gonzalez
Sergio Silva
Trudy Jacobs
William "Bryan" Hillier
“Leadership is a decision, not a position”

You were hired at UTHealth for your abilities, your knowledge and your strengths: All of these were determined to be an asset to the university. Over time, it is natural to find yourself perhaps disillusioned or disconnected from that initial enthusiasm that brought you here. The position or the people you started with may no longer be here, or there are new policies, or new software: But whatever the situation is — there are still constants. You are here. You have abilities. You have knowledge. You are an asset.

We are taught from a young age to “follow the leader” and respect our teachers. Once you hit your career path, you may or may not still be aligned with that perspective. You may have been fortunate to have a manager that you felt understood you, or you may have been challenged by a manager that you felt stifled you. Whatever your situation, the truth remains. You have abilities. You have knowledge. You are an asset.

Leadership isn’t about being a manager — it is about being a leader. Leaders do not have to have followers to lead. You don’t need a title to display leadership skills. Leadership skills at work include, but are not limited to:

- Showing sincere enthusiasm and pride in your work: Get it done accurately and on time.
- Balancing your personal and professional life to find your purpose and fuel your passions.
- Communicating effectively, including exercising empathetic listening skills, apologizing when you need to and taking responsibility for your actions.
- Having personal integrity: Say what you mean and mean what you say.

By displaying leadership skills, you can help motivate those you work closely with (including your own manager)! Remember, you have abilities. You have knowledge. You are an asset.

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Low, Maddy (2017, May 31). *Are You A Leader or A Manager?* Retrieved from https://www.drivingsales.com/maddy-low/blog/are-you-a-leader-or-a-manager

The **University Classified Staff Council (UCSC)** hosted the event “Conversations with Human Resources” on July 26, 2018, at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth and via WebEx. The council invited Eric Fernette, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, to speak to classified staff employees about what the human resources department is currently working on and how they can partner with departments across the university.

Approximately 100 people attended in person or online to hear about how human resources is serving the UTHealth community. Mr. Fernette spoke about items regarding compensation and advancement, employee development programs, employee assistance programs, and other ways that human resources is actively partnering with departments. Specifically, he spoke about the various leadership institutes that are available for employee registration and the Learn2Succeed system for online learning.

Mr. Fernette spoke of strategies to help employees develop their skills in order to advance in their careers. During the last 30 minutes of the event, Mr. Fernette took questions from employees, which included concerns regarding turnover rates, the annual employee survey, vacation and sick leave, adverse weather conditions, and performance evaluations.

All employees who have questions as to what available resources human resources can offer than are encouraged to visit the HR website or call the main line at (713) 500-3130.
Save the Date

Live from SPACE
Conversation with a
McGovern Medical School Astronaut
Serena Aunon-Chancellor, MD
Thursday, September 27, 2018
MSB 3.001
9:00am-11:00am

Please save the date for an EXCITING opportunity the Medical School has to speak with one of our own alumni, Astronaut Serena Aunon-Chancellor, MD, from the International Space Station!

The live talk will take place on Thursday, September 27 between 9:00am-11:00am in MSB 3.001.
For approximately 20 minutes she will give us a tour of the space station and answer questions.

Please submit advanced questions for Dr. Aunon-Chancellor to devan.santora@uth.tmc.edu by September 1.

Please note that we may not use all questions, due to time limitations and NASA approvals.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Upcoming in future UCSC Newsletters:

- UCSC FY19 Officers
- UCSC FY19 Members
- UTHealth at Houston’s Employee Advisory Council’s FY19 Representatives
- And More Events!