

The Administrative Professional Council/Civil Service Council merger proposal: What to know

Why merge?

The Civil Service (CS) and Administrative/Professional (A/P) Councils have served as key shared governance bodies representing the staff of Illinois State University since 1959 and 1976, respectively. While both councils have served their respective staff groups well, recent changes and ongoing concerns have led both councils to consider whether acting as a single united group would be better. The reasons include:

- *Adequate representation on the councils:* Both councils have struggled in recent years to elect adequate members to staff committees and serve in important Council roles. A recent university-wide transition of many A/P employees to CS status has only exacerbated these issues. This leads to challenges in carrying out essential staff functions, including running committees and providing external representation. A united Staff Council would be able to draw from both staff groups, increasing the group of employees eligible to serve on a council and increasing the odds that adequate and consistent representation is present for the many important functions the current councils take on.
- *Common interests and mutually supportive external representation:* Both councils provide membership to important shared governance committees and groups across the university, from the Academic Senate and Campus Communications Committee to the Parking Committee. However, since representation comes from two separate councils, opportunities to coordinate effectively are limited. At the same time, the councils have found that they share a great deal in terms of their interests, such that they are often better served forming a united front in representing staff. Challenges for coordination means challenges for advocacy. A united Staff Council would eliminate these coordination issues, allowing representatives to provide a united front when appropriate. At the same time, the AP and CS Council are both adamant that total staff representation on external committees not be reduced, and that there still be structural mechanisms for a merged council to recognize relevant differences between the staff groups.
- *Coordination on events, activities, and communications:* Historically, the AP and CS Councils have worked together on many social and service opportunities, including can drives, social hours, and a yearly Children's Holiday party. The separation between the two councils hampers coordination on these, leading to unnecessary duplication of events or challenges in properly organizing and promoting events. It is also an impediment to communication with university staff on issues of shared concern, with separate communications teams acting independently or struggling to align messaging. A united Staff Council would provide a far more efficient means of planning and executing programs, events, and initiatives that support and benefit staff across the university, and improve coordination of communication.

What would a merged council look like?

The current proposal for the structure of a merged Staff Council has the following guidelines. Note that since this is an outline, so that not every detail is included. Note also that many of these specifics could be changed if it was found that there was good reason to do so. The general principles that this outline follows, and that any changes would follow, are (a) similar structure and expectations to the existing councils, which are already quite similar to each other, (b) fair representation from both staff groups, and (c) a space to recognize differences between the two staff types where relevant.

- *17 Council members, with 7 reserved AP seats for the 7 highest AP vote-getters, 7 reserved CS seats for the 7 highest vote-getters, and 3 seats that go to the next 3 highest vote-getters regardless of employee classification.* This would ensure that both employee classifications have adequate representation, while also allowing variability and allowing for overall vote-counts.
 - There will also be a non-voting Human Resources liaison, serving in the same capacity as the HR liaisons on the current councils.
 - Voting staff can vote for both AP and CS members
- *CS members must be full-time, benefit-eligible employees past their probationary period. AP members must be minimum 50% AP appointment, and cannot hold faculty rank.* This follows the existing requirements for membership
- *Executive committee consisting of a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.* This follows the structure of both existing councils. These positions would be elected annually by the council. No classification quotas for these roles (such as whether to make certain numbers of executive committee members AP or CS) are anticipated at this time.
- *Similar committee structure to the existing councils, with one key addition:*
 - Scholarship committee, with a minimum of one AP and one CS member, that reviews scholarships for both employee classifications
 - Awards committee, with a minimum of one AP and one CS member, that reviews awards for both employee classifications
 - Elections committee, that runs yearly election process
 - Programming and Events committee, with minimum of two members
 - Communication/Outreach/Marketing committee, with minimum of two members and council Secretary as a standing member
 - Employee Concerns Committee, a new committee with two sub-committees: AP Concerns and CS Concerns. The HR liaison will be a standing member of both subcommittees. The purpose of this committee is to research and analyze all concerns regarding employee policy, employee quality of life, and employee issues for each job classification. This committee will also research and promote the growth of employee benefits.

External representation (such as Senate and committees) and outreach (such as events and newsletters)

The guiding principle for external representation is that *the merger should result in no reductions in external representation*. Representation on all committees, groups, etc., should either be the same, increased, or satisfied at an equal or greater level through other means.

Examples of external representation include:

- Academic Senate and various Senate committees, such as Planning and Finance
- Campus Communications Committee
- Illinois State University Foundation Board
- Illinois State University Annuitants Association
- Parking Advisory Committee

The Staff Council would aim to improve its efficacy over the existing councils by providing a stronger, more united front without reducing numerical representation, and seeking to increase it where appropriate. There could be other reasons to reduce representation in various areas, but those reasons could not come back to the existence of one versus two councils; staff deserve no less representation based on the number of councils representing them.

For events and publications that the currently existing councils produce, decisions would be made on a case-by-case basis on whether they should remain separate or turned into a joint Staff Council project. Some examples for how this might work:

- Joint projects historically hosted by both Councils, such as the Children's holiday party, would be hosted as a single event by the Staff Council.
- Social events, such as morning social events, that are sometimes separate and sometimes jointly hosted, may vary depending on the purpose and audience. There may be cases where an event for a specific employee classification is best, and there may be times where joint events are best.
- For communications such as the CS OpenLine newsletter and the A/P newsletter, the Staff Council would make decisions based on particular needs. It may decide that a single staff newsletter is sufficient; that separate newsletters are preferable; or that both a staff newsletter and separate AP and CS newsletters are best.

Frequently asked questions

Would a single council result in less representation across the university? A key principle of the merger is that representation is not reduced numerically nor in terms of impact. The existing councils feel that a more coordinated group with the same numerical representation would be a stronger advocating force for staff at ISU (Illinois State University).

Would the Council be balanced between representing AP and CS interests? There would be a set number of seats guaranteed for each employee classification, ensuring that there is strong representation from both groups no matter what. At the same time, there would be a small number of “open” seats to allow for some variation based on the result of elections.

How will important differences between AP and CS employee classifications be accounted for? The Staff Council would have a special committee, the Employee Concerns Committee, that specifically focuses on concerns related to policies and issues that impact individual job classifications, as well as shared issues. It would have two subcommittees, one for each employee classification, headed by a respective member of that employee classification.

I have questions about the specific structure of the council—its size, length of terms, etc. Beyond the information provide above, some of the finer points can only be decided in later revisions and detailing of the Council structure. The guiding principles for structure are that it be similar to the existing councils, that representation be fair, and that relevant differences between the job classifications be accounted for. The size of the council; the set of committees, their purpose, and their size; the election process, term length, and term limits; and overall rules for procedure would closely match those of the existing Councils. The purpose is not to create a body that functions differently, but one that brings both employee classifications together.

Will CS members still be elected by Group? No. The Staff Council’s proposed structure requires that no more than three council members be from the same Department or Unit. This will ensure that council membership for both CS and AP members is spread across the university.

Will staff only be able to vote for members of their own staff classification? No. Staff will be able to vote for both AP and CS members. CS staff are no less likely to know of and be familiar with AP candidates than CS members, and vice versa—we all work together, after all! Elected members of the Staff Council would be serving both their respective employee classification and staff as a whole, and so staff as a whole will have a say in the election of all members.

Will there be changes to events, newsletters, etc., that are hosted by the existing councils? Most likely yes, though exactly what will change is something that will have to be determined as the process continues. There are already events that are jointly hosted by both councils or that are very similar between councils; these are likely to be merged. Others may make more sense to stay specific to each council. Likewise, things such as staff newsletters may either stay divided or become one, depending on their exact role and the decisions of a merged council.