



In this issue of the *Dietrich School Bulletin*, I'm pleased to turn the spotlight on initiatives being led and supported by our professional staff. Throughout the pandemic, staff members have been working alongside faculty to help ensure that students have the best academic experience possible under more than challenging circumstances. In addition, staff have been finding new and innovative ways to move the school forward on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, one of our cornerstone priorities. They've also been

considering how we might best prepare for the time when more of us have the opportunity to return to campus, and what our new working environment could look like. It's been a year like no other. And fortunately for us, we work with staff whose dedication to excellence and service is beyond compare. Please read on to learn more.

The Future of Work

Over the past several months and under the leadership of Executive Director for Staff Personnel and Senior Assistant Dean Michele Montag, two working groups comprised of senior staff members have been considering issues related to remote work, and how to best position the Dietrich School and the College of General Studies for the time when it's safe for everyone to return to campus. As part of this process, the groups explored how our peer institutions are managing similar challenges and what best practices already exist; and, reflected on what the opportunities and barriers could be in increasing flexibility for staff in all units.

According to Montag, these have been far-ranging conversations ultimately aimed at determining how the Dietrich School and CGS can be—and stay—on the cutting edge, even in the midst of dynamic and unpredictable circumstances.

In late January, the working groups presented Montag with a revised draft of the School's flexible work arrangements guidelines and their initial reflections about how the office space that staff members currently occupy across campus might be reconfigured to reflect new and more flexible working arrangements. In parallel to these discussions, the Office of Human Resources is working on revisions to University policies regarding remote work and flexible work arrangements.

Montag will next determine how and when to expand the remote work/space conversation more broadly to include all staff. Says Montag, "Because the work that our staff members do is so varied—some of it happens in traditional offices, some of it happens in laboratories and machine shops; some of it requires a basic laptop computer, while other tasks necessitate highly specialized equipment—there is no simple one-size-fits-all solution. But we are committed to investing the time and effort necessary to listening and learning before we propose a comprehensive plan."

Good Trouble Food Drive

COVID-19 has cost thousands of Pennsylvanians their livelihoods and, as a result, our state has seen a dramatic increase in poverty and food insecurity. Since the beginning of the pandemic, adult residents of the Keystone State have experienced a 42% increase in food insecurity. For children, that increase has been a heartbreaking 57%. Statewide data indicates that pandemic-prompted food insecurity has impacted Black residents more severely than White residents—one in four Black Pennsylvanians is currently food insecure compared to one in nine White Pennsylvanians. These figures align with statewide poverty rates, which are 13% overall but 27% for Black residents.

These sobering statistics led Destiny Harrison-Griffin, a Dietrich School senior majoring in political science and Africana Studies, to take action. Destiny is a member of the Dietrich School's undergraduate recruitment team, a dynamic unit made up of a core group of staff and a team of student Ambassadors. Working with a subgroup of her peer Ambassadors called "Good Trouble" who focus on social justice and community service, Destiny collaborated with recruitment team staff to initiate a partnership with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to raise funds to help members of the region's Black community who are experiencing food insecurity.

You can learn more about Good Trouble, the Food Bank, and this important student-driven fundraising effort by [visiting the Good Trouble Food Bank web page \(https://secure.ggiv.com/event/gootro\)](https://secure.ggiv.com/event/gootro). The fundraiser ends on July 31. Please give what you can to help ensure that all members of our community are able to feed themselves and their families.

In-Demand DEI Workshops Continue to Attract Staff and Faculty Participants

The Dietrich School's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) workshops are anti-bias educational programs that establish welcoming, inclusive and diverse environments where staff and faculty can engage in productive conversations on topics such as identity, the impact of stereotypes, bias and discrimination. Participants experience each of the four consecutive sessions as a cohort through interactive and engaging discussions and activities. Each individual gains strategies to positively impact the campus climate in the Dietrich School and CGS.

Since launching in May 2019, 138 staff and faculty members have participated in the 10-hour series with representation from 21 programs and departments. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive.

100% of participants who completed the evaluation agree/strongly agree they could integrate the content learned into their work, felt the training was a good use of their time, and would recommend this training to others:

- "What I loved about this training is that I learned a lot because it worked more like a workshop in which we were learning from each other than a training session per se."

- “This training was simply the most valuable professional development experience I have ever had. The time and commitment are more than repaid in the returns for culture, community, and personal growth.”

- “This was by far the most informational, impactful, and literally life-changing training that I have ever been through as a Pitt employee. Common topics were discussed, but nothing was discussed in a “common” way. I think what also contributed to the success of the training was the enthusiasm and heartfelt participation provided by each participant - such investment was not "required," but by providing that emotional investment, it literally elevated the training from “typical” to “outstanding.”

At the conclusion of the training, participants are invited to join a Dietrich School DEI online Teams forum to share resources and connect with one another. A monthly one-hour discussion on a DEI topic offers participants the opportunity to meet others who have completed the training and continue advancing dialogue and action on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Dietrich School.

Interested in participating? The next DEI offering is mid-May 2020. Registration information can be found at <https://www.as.pitt.edu/diversity/deittraining>. Contact Maureen Lazar (lazarm@pitt.edu) for any questions.

EIT Accessibility

In Spring 2020, the University implemented a new Electronic Information and Technology (EIT) accessibility policy aimed at providing equitable access to services and content available to the internal and external Pitt community. The Dietrich School and College of General Studies are committed to full compliance with this policy, and every unit across both the school and the college will be expected to adapt as necessary to ensure that all digital media—emails, pdfs, Word documents, websites, etc.—as well as any special software or applications, meet the established Pitt standards for accessibility.

The University expects a phased rollout and adherence to the policy, with the priorities:

1. anything new (developed or purchased) must be in compliance,
2. anything fundamental to the organization will need to be evaluated and updated, and
3. anything that is secondary to the functioning of the organization will be evaluated and updated.

The Dietrich School and CGS will employ a phased approach to achieving full compliance, with the first step being to educate ourselves about, and adopt accessibility techniques in, EIT development and maintenance. To assist with that process, the school’s communications and IT teams are working with University Marketing Communications and the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to develop a library of resources, including instructional videos, on how staff and faculty can improve the accessibility of their digital materials.

In addition, a series of informational presentations will be offered to staff and faculty to help address questions and concerns. The first of these programs, presented by Amy Wildman, Senior Enterprise

Systems Analyst, happened during last Fall’s All-Staff Meeting. A similar program for faculty will be provided during an upcoming Full Faculty Meeting. Stay tuned for additional information as the school and college take the important and necessary steps to make our electronic communication accessible to everyone.

One IT Update

Pitt IT is working on an initiative named “One IT” that endeavors to integrate IT organizations throughout campus under the Pitt IT umbrella in order to improve support by more effectively leveraging resources across the University. Following the successful integration of the Financial Information Systems and central Human Resources units, the Dietrich School will be the first academic/research group to be integrated into the larger Pitt IT organization.

As part of the integration process, Dietrich School and Pitt IT staff went through a series of discovery interviews and planning sessions in early 2021. The Pitt IT integration team will now review the discovery information and assemble a proposal and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for moving forward. The MOU will stand as a service level agreement between Pitt IT and the Dietrich School, outlining how the new One IT organization will maintain and improve on the concierge-style IT service levels that the Dietrich School has come to expect from our current IT structure.

Under this agreement, your current IT support providers will remain largely unchanged, but their reporting structure will move to Pitt IT. This will allow the school’s entire IT support team to leverage the Pitt IT organizational resources and provide the opportunity for a higher level of service and efficiency working within the larger organization. Look for more information to be released in the coming weeks regarding this University initiative.

Long-Time Staffer in a New Role

After a thorough search process that included several excellent candidates, long-time Dietrich School staff member Mat Romick has been selected as the new Senior Director for Budget and Finance. In addition to his daily budget and finance duties Mat will also be responsible for creating a strategic, team-based approach to be applied to the management of the Dietrich School’s Budget and Finance processes.

Mat has been the Division Administrator within the Natural Sciences since 2017 and has been part of the Dietrich School since 2001. Prior to becoming a Division Administrator Mat held various departmental administrative positions within the Natural Sciences with a progression of responsibilities.

Mat completed both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Pitt. His first official day in the position was Monday, March 1.