

Job Description

Job Title:	Staff Advocacy Officer
Department:	University of Waterloo Staff Association
Reports To:	President, Staff Association
Jobs Reporting:	None
Salary Grade:	USG 11
Effective Date:	November 1, 2023

Primary Purpose

The University of Waterloo Staff Association (UWSA) strives to improve working conditions in its unique role representing both non-management and management staff at the University of Waterloo (UW). The UWSA acts and advocates on behalf of UWSA members to the administration of the UW. UWSA promotes open communication and collaboration between the UWSA and all members of the UW community including confronting inequities and acknowledging issues in staff employment across UW.

The Staff Advocacy Officer is an executive level position for the UWSA, providing strategic advisement and support to the President, in their yearly seconded role and acts as the chief staff representative and advocate for UW employees who are UWSA members. The position provides a strategic cross-UW perspective to inform the elected Board and oversees UWSA operations with the President. They provide expertise in employment advocacy and social justice. This role is integral to the UWSA's effectiveness with their deep understanding of the university culture and institutional memory of both UW and the UWSA.

Key Accountabilities

Strategy

- Advise the UWSA President on strategy and efforts to address structural and institutional concerns about staff related policies, programs, and workforce decisions.
- Serve as the primary staff leader and resource for UWSA, bringing expertise and deep institutional understanding to strengthen strategies, policies, and practices.
- Steward and facilitate learning opportunities around all facets of equitable and fair workplace practices for elected UWSA Board Directors.
- Identify trends in issues faced by UWSA members and work with the President to develop strategic approach to resolve.
- Provide strategic analyses of issues faced by UWSA members and develop strategic recommendations with UWSA President.

Leadership & Liaison

- Serve as a primary liaison with UWSA members, elected UWSA Board Directors, executive level university leaders (including Deans, unit leaders and human resources officials) on staff advocacy issues, project updates, proposals, and planning.
- Partner with stakeholders across UW to identify and resolve issues.
- Develop and maintain partnerships that generate the necessary buy-in to achieve shared goals.
- Develop and build relationships with UWSA members to create safe spaces for inquiry and dispute resolution.

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- Advise on UWSA strategy and UW policy in key constituent meetings to ensure appropriate responsive follow-up and accountability and to facilitate resolution of matters requiring the President's attention.
- Serve as UWSA advocacy liaison with UW Vice Presidents, Deans, and other Senior Directors, establishing and maintaining strong and collaborative relationships across the university and with external constituents.
- Independently handle high level or sensitive concerns and requests on behalf of the UWSA.

Advocacy & Advising

- Serve as subject-matter expert, handling inquiries, developing initial action plan recommendations for UWSA members' consideration in decision making.
- Serve as chief advocate and critical contact in assessing, determining navigation routes, and seeking resolution options for staff issues.
- Educate and advise President on UW policy application, legal processes, and workplace legislation.
- Educate and advise UWSA members on their workplace rights.
- Build capacity of UWSA members to present issues, identify workable solutions and effectively participate in resolution response.
- Confer with UWSA legal counsel acting as primary liaison for UWSA members.
- Work in conjunction with human resources and other campus representatives to address and resolve UWSA member concerns.
- Research new developments impacting UWSA members, including but not limited to workplace legislation; UW policies; equity, diversity, and inclusion; and health and safety.
- Develop, implement and oversee professional processes and workflow to ensure optimum functioning of the UWSA in the protection of UWSA member rights.
- Ensure all UWSA member requests/inquiries are addressed thoroughly, efficiently, and judiciously.
- Maintain accurate confidential files and data records.

Communication and Administrative Advisement to Elected Board

- Advise on historical policy, protocol, practices and prior UWSA Board and committee decisions, providing stability, continuity, and institutional memory to the elected UWSA Board.
- Mitigate risk by providing ongoing advice to the UWSA Board and its standing committees on UWSA By-law, Memorandum of Agreement, and university policy and practices.
- Identify, research, and manage long- and short-term strategic direction of the UWSA.
- Ensure continuity and accountability on Board and committee policies by ensuring all UWSA Board and committee work is in alignment with UWSA mission and in accordance with relevant legislation
- Represent UWSA and/or staff on university level committees.

Financial Oversight

- Create annual budget in collaboration with UWSA employees and appointed UWSA Treasurer.
- Ensure financial records are maintained and reported to UWSA Treasurer and, where appropriate, to internal and external oversight authorities.
- Provide signing authority on all internal and external financial accounts.
- Ensure financial statements are prepared and financial data records maintained in a timely and secure manner.

**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess and correct health and safety hazards, as required.*

Required Qualifications

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Education

- University degree in helping professions, leadership, mediation, or related discipline and/or equivalent education and experience is required.
- Advanced degree would be an asset.

Experience

- Minimum of ten years progressive professional experience, performing duties related to key accountabilities.
- Experience nurturing organizations through their journey to becoming great places to work, creating spaces where all employees can work productively and feel a valued part of the team.
- In-depth knowledge of the UW environment, including structure, policies, and employment practices.
- Experience developing and implementing workplace resolution initiatives in complex organizations.
- Experience handling complex and sensitive issues with discretion.
- Experience in delivering and advising on advocacy, leadership, and negotiation.
- Project management experience, planning, overseeing, and implementing strategic initiatives, including project coordination, budget management, data analysis and effective decision making.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Excellent cross-functional leadership skills with the ability to set a strong example of how to resolve complex issues in respectful ways.
- Highly developed emotional intelligence skills.
- Strong political and business acumen skills.
- Exceptional strategic skills with the ability to address tactical and operational matters as needed.
- Strong analytical skills to inform advocacy assessment and decision making.
- Excellent communication and diplomacy skills as the interpersonal link between UWSA Board, UWSA members, and UW.
- Commitment to collaboration with the ability to pivot as needs and priorities evolve, navigating with composure under pressure.
- Exceptional organizational and problem-solving skills with an ability to work autonomously and cooperatively.

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** : Develop and maintain strategic, operational, and tactical relationships with both internal (UWSA) and external (UW and beyond) contacts.
Internal: with UWSA members: promote, justify or settle highly sensitive matters; UWSA Board Directors: obtain action, reach agreement and negotiate. UW management (including Human Resources leadership and employees, the Secretariat, Conflict Management and Human Rights office, Safety Office, members of the UW Executive Council, including the Associate Provost, Human Resources, Finance, and line supervisors and managers): promote, justify, negotiate, and settle highly sensitive matters.
Externally: Legal and financial professionals (UWSA external counsel and accountant): deal with, influence and obtain action, including representing the UWSA at formal legal hearings (e.g., Ontario Human Rights tribunals). External organization (principally COUSA – the Council of Ontario University Staff Associations and Unions) and UWSA Corporate partners: promote, justify, settle, deal with, influence and motivate.
- **Level of Responsibility:** Manage UWSA-wide functions and processes that are highly specialized and sensitive. This critical advocacy role is required to provide potentially career-altering guidance, counselling, and advice to UW staff. Acts a chief advisor on critical matters to the UWSA President and UWSA Board.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** Consult with and advise the UWSA President on the strategic direction of the university wide association and has critical impact on the actions, decisions, and reputation of

the UWSA. This position is accountable for overseeing initiative development, staff issue assessment, plan development and resolution as well as budget development.

- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** This role in an office setting involves minimal physical demands and moderate sensory effort resulting in slight fatigue, strain, or risk of injury. Some lifting, carrying/handling of large objects may occasionally be required.
- **Working Environment:** The incumbent is the chief contact for contentious issue identification and resolution. This role involves extreme psychological risk resulting from unavoidable exposure to disagreeable or uncomfortable environmental conditions. It may include exposure to emotionally disturbing experiences and/or interactions with members of the UW community who are upset, angry, abusive, aggressive, unstable, or unpredictable (e.g., emotionally charged situations with staff who are facing job-loss) and unusual hours or schedules (to accommodate staff who wish to meet outside regular business hours). The role requires travel to multiple-day conferences and events to represent the UWSA, as well as attendance at UWSA social functions. *Hybrid – on campus and remote office work, with frequent meetings (online and in person)*