Minutes
Operating Staff Council
March 5, 2015
Sky Room – 9:00 a.m.


Absent: Carlos Raices, Gina Shannon

Guests: Robin Andersen, NIU President Dr. Doug Baker, Sarah Klaper, Andy Peccarelli, Roselyn Snell, Rhonda Wybourn

I. Call to Order
President Jay Monteiro called the regular meeting of the OSC to order at 9:08 a.m.

II. Roll Call
Attendance was recorded by Stacey Bivens.

III. Approval of Agenda
A motion was made by Victoria Nay to accept the Agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Holly Nicholson and passed by unanimous vote.

IV. Approval of February 5, 2015, Minutes
A motion was made by John Hulseberg to accept the Minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by David Long and passed by unanimous vote.

V. Treasurer’s Report
The Treasurer’s report was read and a motion was made by Barb Andree to accept the report. The motion was seconded by David Smith and passed by unanimous vote.

VI. Visiting Committees/Guests
A. Dr. Doug Baker attended the OSC meeting. The Council had provided Dr. Baker with a list of questions to be answered during his visit.

1) Do you have any specific information that you can share on how the governor’s new state budget proposal will impact NIU?

President Baker first went over Governor Rauner’s proposed budget and its impact on NIU. The state budget is $31.4 billion and is several billion dollars out of balance. It appears as though the governor wants the legislature to make cuts, while the legislature wants the governor to do
it. As of now, universities will have to absorb 31% in budget cuts, although Dr. Baker feels that this percentage could change. Overall, enrollments look like they are going down across the state. NIU applications are down. NIU cannot touch bond revenue to make up for the budget cuts. President Baker showed a pie chart that explained how operating costs are divided up. NIU receives money from tuition and fees and its state appropriation. Spending includes: academic affairs, utilities, facilities & grounds, student affairs, athletics, internal affairs, general counsel. State support for operating expenses and employee fringe benefits (insurance and retirement); more money is spent on pension than operating costs.

What are NIU’s options? The university can go ahead with the 31% cut in its budget. We have already gone through a decade of cuts and raised tuition in response. Other options include increasing enrollment, prioritize, and reduce workforce through attrition, or a tax increase. Or, we could go a step further and work on the pipeline. One half of students who graduate from high school are not ready for college or a career. How well are universities coupled with the job market? With adult learners? Is there a better way to organize universities? A representative introduced a bill that would require community colleges to offer one baccalaureate degree. Here at NIU, on campus housing is not even close to full, but the price has gone down. The cost of tuition does not increase after 12 credit hours. There is a plan to remodel the Holmes Student Center using bond money. Barb Andree suggested that Dr. Baker be very open about using money and for what it is used.

2) Do you see layoffs, outsourcing, or furloughs as potential solutions to our budget reduction?

Dr. Baker explained that at his last position at the University of Idaho, the campus bookstore was outsourced to Barnes & Noble, and food services were also outsourced. In both cases, employees seemed happy with these situations, because the companies had promotional opportunities for workers that were not available prior to outsourcing.

3) Is NIU doing anything in regard to the governor’s recommendation that all current employees be moved to the Tier II retirement plan? Have they looked into how many employees this would effect and what the effect would be on those employees?

Dr. Baker is very hopeful that the Illinois Supreme Court will back the retirement plans as they are with no changes.

4) There are a lot of plans for student retention. Are there any plans for employee retention?

Dr. Baker wants to keep budget reductions as low as possible, and work on keeping up student retention.
5) With morale being a topic of concern within all employee shared governance groups on campus, what are three things that the administration is doing to help improve morale?

John Hulseberg, OSC member and chair of the Employee Morale ad hoc committee, shared with President Baker the OSC’s Employee Morale Action Plan. The plan has two parts. The first is the OSC’s requests to Dr. Baker’s cabinet, including support for the Operating Staff Personnel Advisor position; continue to recognize employee morale issues during the Program Prioritization Process so that all NIU employees are shown their importance to NIU’s success; further communication by adding a “comment” or “suggestion” form on the Resources for Faculty & Staff webpage at niu.edu so employees have the opportunity to give input or suggestions; work with Human Resource Services to use the payroll advice form to share important or timely information.

The second part of the plan is the OSC’s initial action plan steps. These include a series of brown bag luncheons specifically designed for Civil Service employees, and continue to develop the relationship between the OSC and the University Council; promote communication between the OSC and Civil Service employees, by rotating three of the OSC’s monthly meetings to different locations on campus to raise awareness about the council and make it more accessible to civil service employees; adding an e-newsletter; and encourage efforts to recognize employee accomplishments, especially at the supervisor level.

Andy Small commented that we need to recapture the family feeling that NIU used to have. He also suggested that Dr. Baker consider keeping StaffFest going. Using the bill to repeal the 50% dependent tuition waivers as an example, Barb Andree said that a statement from Dr. Baker supporting the NIU staff and faculty in this situation could help boost morale.

6) We know that an Operating Staff Personnel Advisor position that is on par with a Faculty and SPS position has been approved. What are your thoughts on this position and where are we in the process?

President Baker is supportive of this position. Andy Small had given him the timeline from the beginning (writing the job description) to end (the point of filling the position). Hopefully, the position will be filled by August in fiscal year 2016.

7) What can the OSC do to help him in his role?

We can work together to make sure information is shared in different outlets; OSC’s Public Relations subcommittee, NIU Today, e-mail announcements. Sarah Klaper suggested that the President’s PowerPoint presentation be redone by someone who knows public finance and who can explain in simpler terms why certain funds have to be used in certain ways.

B. Roselyn Snell from the Center for Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources visited the OSC meeting to share information about the upcoming conference,
“The NIU Experience: Journey into Affirmative Action, Diversity and Equal Opportunity.” The conference intends to highlight diversity in a very broad sense, and emphasize positive action for positive change. Some of the topics will include what veterans bring to the workplace, human trafficking, and how our own backgrounds dictate how we treat each other. Ms. Snell related an incident from last August in which a Fulbright student from El Salvador made an appointment to look at an apartment. When she arrived to look at the apartment, the landlord told her he did not have any available. This student was denied housing right here in DeKalb. The conference takes place on Wednesday, March 25, 2015. To register, go to the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources page in the Human Resource Services site.

VII. Announcements/Correspondence
A. House Bill 403, which would repeal the 50% tuition waiver (a state employee benefit) has been introduced in the Illinois House. This bill is extremely puzzling since doing away with the waiver does not save the state or taxpayers any money. Jay Monteiro encouraged everyone to contact their representative(s) about the bill, but stressed that this should be done on personal stationery, e-mail or phone. Please do not use NIU resources for this correspondence.

VIII. President’s Reports
A. Board of Trustees
The Committee to the Board of Trustees met on February 26, 2015. The Finance, Facilities and Operations Committee approved a large number of annual contracts and new turf at Huskie Stadium. In the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel there was a request for a new B.S. degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Sabbatical leaves were discussed.

B. Faculty Senate
Dr. George Slotsve was nominated for and received the Bob Lane Faculty Advocacy Award.

C. Supportive Professional Staff Council (SPSC)
No report

D. University Council
Met on February 25, 2015. Dr. Baker gave a presentation on Governor Rauner’s budget cuts and their effect on NIU.
IX. Committee Reports
A. Workplace Issues The committee is finalizing the details of its “Steer Your Career” brown bag series.

Ad hoc Employee Morale Committee
See section VI.A.5

B. Elections and Appointments
No report

C. Public Relations
Patricia Liberty-Baczek reported that 14 welcome letters were sent to new Civil Service employees in January. She also shared that there were eight applications submitted for the Operating Staff Dependent Scholarship Award. Two applications were disqualified because they were incomplete. Two changes regarding the application include highlighting the submission deadline in several locations to ensure that all applications are turned in on time, and increasing the minimum GPA to 2.5. There was a question about how many scholarships to award. In the past, the OSC has awarded two scholarships: $500.00 ($250.00 per semester for two students.) This year there is enough money to award three scholarships. Andy Small suggested that the OSC award three scholarships at $500.00 each. A motion was made by David Long to award three scholarships. The motion was seconded by Barb Andree and passed by majority vote. There was one nay vote.

D. Employee Advisory Council (EAC) Andy Small, EAC’s chair, reported that the latest EAC meeting was quite contentious. The University of Illinois was audited by the State Universities Civil Service Systems Office, and there were over 700 issues regarding AP (SPS) versus Civil Service positions. University of Illinois is now declaring that the system is broken and is suggesting the system be overhauled. Hearings are planned and Andy plans to testify at these.

E. University Advisory Committee (UAC)
UAC has been receiving input from committees regarding new restrictions on state travel. These restrictions affect cutting edge research, recruitment of faculty, study abroad opportunities for students, and availability of continuing professional education.

F. Administrative Professionals Advisory Council (APAC)
Robin Andersen shared that the Administrative Professionals Day Breakfast will be held on April 22, 2015, in the Altgeld Ballroom. At this point, one person has been nominated for the Pat Siebrasse Administrative Professionals Award for
Excellence. APAC members are assisting each other when there are questions about Outlook. Additionally, APAC is starting a mentoring program for new employees, and employees starting a new position.

X. **Old Business**

A. Proposed Non-Smoking Policy
The Smoke Free Campus Task Force, looking for input on NIU’s proposed nonsmoking policy, held four sessions with students, faculty, and staff to garner their opinions. Most were concerned that NIU’s policy is tougher than the law requires. The state law goes into effect July 1, 2015.

B. Prioritization
The results of the online survey that was conducted from February 9 – 23, 2015, to determine potential criteria is being used to evaluate academic and administrative programs, and to establish quintiles.

C. Flex-time
There was discussion about whether NIU administration would allow flex-time as we saw in 2014, as it is thought to be a boost to employee morale. Jay Monteiro expressed the opinion that this summer will likely be the same as last year, i.e., flex-time will be an option as long as offices are staffed all five days of the work week.

XI. **New Business**

A. Wellness Fair
The Wellness Fair will be held on April 1, 2015. Patricia Liberty-Baczek commented that the OSC should have a presence at the Fair. Victoria Nay volunteered to organize a booth with Patricia Liberty-Baczek’s assistance.

XII. **Adjournment**
The meeting was adjourned at noon.

Respectfully submitted,
Stacey Bivens
Operating Staff Council Secretary