

**Supportive Professional Staff Council
Minutes – General Meeting**

November 9, 2023

Teams/In Person Hybrid Meeting

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Approved December 14, 2023

Call to Order: President Bohanon called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Roll Call: Secretary Valdez called the roll and confirmed a quorum.

Members Present: Felicia Bohanon, John Boswell, Bill Braksick, Heath Duncan, Liz Guess, Joe Lovelace, Margaret Myles, Tom O’Grady, Michelle Pickett, Anthony Preston, Andrew Rogers, Ronald Smith, Christina Sutcliffe, Lauren Teso-Warner, Manuel Valdez, Dan Wolfe

Members Excused: Cody Carter, Candice Olagunju, Jesse Perez, Shannon Stoker

Guests: Ben Creed, Faculty Senate; Natasha Johnson, Operating Staff Council

Approval of Agenda: Properly motioned and seconded (Rogers/Smith); all in favor, none opposed, Agenda approved by voice vote.

Approval of September 14, and October 12, 2023, Minutes: Properly motioned and seconded (Smith/Pickett) all in favor, none opposed, September and October minutes approved by voice vote.

University Committee Reports

University Council: Ben Creed reported ongoing budget talks with the legislature, IBHE, and the Governor’s office focusing on ensuring state funding for public higher education is adequate, equitable, and stable. There were conversations about more flexibility for how students can spend MAP money. President Freeman also discussed ongoing efforts to engage in regulatory reform. The Council also heard a presentation from CFO Middlemist and interim EVPP Elish-Piper covering the history and context of our current budget situation including the structural deficit. The budgeting process, ongoing efforts across campus by senior administration and various units, ways faculty can help through revenue generation and/or expenditure reductions were discussed.

Faculty Senate: Ben Creed reported Middlemist and Elish-Piper shared a similar presentation as was presented to University Council. Discussion followed about what resources are available to ensure NIU was supporting students in their first year and beyond; piloting a January and possibly a May term; questions about recruiting international students and exploration of the amount of time dedicated to trainings and other regulatory burdens.

Creed also gave an update on the process and timeline of the EVPP search. Faculty and staff are encouraged to attend the on-campus visits of finalists to learn about the candidates and to demonstrate that NIU is the place to be.

Also, the Faculty Senate approved the addition of July 5th, 2024 to Academic Calendar as a university closure day following President Freeman making this an administrative closure day.

Student Government Association: No report.

Operating Staff Council: Natasha Johnson reported the OSC did a priority survey to discover what is important to civil service operating staff. The top three issues are (1) internal equity/wage compression; (2) enrollment recruitment and retention and (3) job classifications. The OSC will be working with John Acardo to see what is within their wheelhouse to make operating staff work situations the best possible.

Vice President's Report:

Athletic Board reported record setting \$1.16 from Huskies Invest Week of Giving. Facilities Improvements FY23: Outdoor track was cleaned and repainted last summer; Soccer pads installed; Graphics and carpet installed in Yordon Center; Upgrades to the Sports Performance Center including new weights; New turf will be needed at Huskie Stadium, has already been planning for in budget due to lifespan of turf in Midwest; Ongoing improvements to be made in FY24. Next meeting February 7th.

Campus Parking Committee: Lot 44 which started out as Blue/Yellow reverted back to Blue due to safety concerns; discussed implications of closing Normal Road and access to parking and some complaints about access to parking garage.

Computing Facilities: Reviewed classroom tech Wi-Fi use for in demand for the fall 2023 semester; Received TEAMS Voice Update – Working on Phase 2 Discussion of new Anywhere Prints rollout and reviewed the AI design for Blackboard Design Assistant. Margaret Myles updated information on printer rollout. The new vendor for Anywhere Prints is Ricoh and the application is React. Migrating to Paper Cut (from Pharos Print Software)

Old Business: None.

New Business:

Meeting of Council Committees and Committee Chairs:

Advocacy: Anthony Preston & Joe Lovelace: Joe Lovelace reporting: This committee discussed following up on some of what the advocacy committee did last year regarding the survey. Joe shared, and Liz Guess confirmed, that John Arcardo is looking at transitioning some people from civil service back to SPS which is something to further explore. Joe explained they are looking to get some clarity from John in terms of what the HR position is, to get a handle on their thinking and the process.

Lovelace asked that any lobbying for specific positions be funneled via this committee.

Liz Guess expressed that John would welcome thoughts from the Council. Joe expressed his desire to proceed cautiously with this issue, getting a little foundation from John before we contribute input so as not to frustrate any plans that might be in place. Guess agreed that we should make a coordinated effort.

Felicia suggested the Advocacy committee do a January 2024 survey giving the advantage of three surveys to review, 2020, 2022, and 2024.

Awards: Christina Sutcliffe & Dan Wolfe: Christina Sutcliffe reporting: This committee's game plan is to advertise SPS Council awards via *NIU Today* with a quick, 3-click survey designed to gather names from our various SPS constituencies for follow up by the committee.

Because the Awards committee has struggled to get nominations, they need SPS Council Representatives to help by *re-sending the NIU Today* information to members of their own group/department for a closer look, hopefully resulting in more nominations.

The committee is looking at a February 2nd deadline for nominations, having until the end of February to get further information for decisions by early March.

Dan Wolfe added: The committee needs people to start nominating. Self-nominate and nominate someone you think would be good for an award. The committee needs a pool of nominees and asks Council members to help get the word out to solicit nominations not only to pass along, but for self-nomination as well.

[You do not need to identify a nominee's employment status as to whether they are SPS or not, that will be taken care of by the committee as they vet and gather more in-depth information about nominees to support their decision-making process.]

Constitution & Elections: Shannon Stoker, Felicia Bohanon & Tom O'Grady: Tom O'Grady reporting: The committee reviewed the Constitution and found a few things to look at to see if they were still applicable, such as committees. Are the descriptions accurate to what we are doing or what we want to do with our committees? We need everyone's input. There were a few other things to review: elections/how held; vacancies on committees. Those are the committee's objectives for the year--until election season when we get very busy.

Events: Jesse Perez, Michelle Pickett, John Boswell & Margaret Myles: Michelle Pickett reporting: This committee met twice to discuss some different social events. They are looking to plan an event in December—a kind of stress reliever fun event maybe at Fatties. They are looking at a Monday night in December, maybe a game night or karaoke. They are also looking at some different events in the spring semester and seeing if they can combine some scholarship fund raising activities with those events. At this point they are planning an early (Monday, December 4th) event at Fatties to start about 3:00 or 3:30 to 5:00 or 5:30 –two hours. (Poll indicates 3-5 preference.) Once the date is secured, they will share that out. Choices are Monday the 4th or 11th or 18th. Preferably the 4th or 11th so folks can go to the many other holiday parties, and Monday nights are not super busy at Fatties. The committee hopes to have everything secured before Thanksgiving. Council members are urged to attend and bring a friend. Some of the things the committee is looking at for spring are “Winding-Down Wednesdays” or “Margarita Mondays,” not that there is a need to have alcohol at events, just looking for a fun theme.

Professional Development: Lauren Teso-Warner, Candice Olagunju, Cody Carter, and

Margaret Myles: Felicia Bohanon reported her meeting with the two co-chairs looking at ways to ramp up professional development this year. They looked at the survey and some of the issues that came up previously. Based on that they think it would be helpful to have another survey to look at those things relating to professional development to get a better sense of what is needed. The committee decided to have a professional development period, open to all, from 11:30 – 12:00 following specific general meetings as a time individuals could come and learn about things related to professional development.

The committee anticipates the first professional development activity this semester. A link will be sent out to all SPS employees to make sure they are aware of this opportunity. The committee's recommendation for the first topic is a general conversation about SPS sabbaticals from 11:30-12:00 and then for those who are more interested, the session could extend an additional half hour until 12:30 p.m. Felicia asked members to please send her your ideas and feedback about this committee's plan.

SPS Scholarship Fund: Heath Duncan, Jesse Perez, and Ron Smith: Ron Smith reporting: This committee met twice and discussed a couple of items they thought were relevant for this upcoming year: ways to increase scholarship, awareness, exposure, financial support among SPS employees and beyond. A couple of fund raising ideas were mentioned: making a QR code and payroll deduction forms available at all SPSC events. Over the past two cycles there has been a limited number of student applicants, and the committee has had difficulty promoting these scholarships to a larger audience.

The scholarship application process opens November 15 and runs through February 28th. The committee does not expect to meet again until late January and early February, depending upon how many applications are received. Ron is going to check with Anne Hardy about getting our scholarship information on the scholarship page. This Council supports two scholarships: \$1200 for an employee's dependent; \$750 for a student who has been impacted or influenced by an SPS staff member.

[President Bohanon will be following up with the Regional Community Relations and Communications & Technology committees.]

Announcements: Margaret Myles suggested an extra administrative closure day in January would be "way more amazing" than the December 22 closure given all the craziness that happens at the end of December. President Bohanon expressed her willingness to put Margaret's suggestion out there.

President Bohanon thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and expressed her appreciation of the council's participation and involvement with its committees. Bohanon noted that everyone has been assigned a committee and she wants to make sure people are participating and are engaged because the council needs everyone's ideas, suggestions and support in terms of moving things forward. Felicia closed the meeting noting some exciting upcoming plans and actions: December social, professional development seminars, increased scholarship support and future crowdfunding.

Adjournment: President Bohanon asked if there were any other comments or concerns, any questions, any suggestions? Hearing none, President Bohanon adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Representatives: Please contact our SPSC Secretary, Manuel Valdez, (mvaldez2@niu.edu) and SPSC Administrative Aide, Frances Mitchell, (fmitchell@niu.edu) if you are unable to attend a meeting. An Alternate will be contacted for you.

Alternates: You are invited to attend all meetings.

*Respectfully submitted
by Administrative Aide
for Manuel Valdez, Secretary
Supportive Professional Staff Council*