

**Supportive Professional Staff Council  
Minutes**

February 9, 2023  
Hybrid Teams Meeting  
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
**Approved March 9, 2023**

**Call to Order:** President Bohanon called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

**Members Present:** Felicia Bohanon, John Boswell, Melanie Costello, LaBrian Carrington, Heath Duncan, Lupe Flores, Liz Guess, Joe Lovelace, Frances Mitchell (Admin Aide), Scott Mooberry, Margaret Myles, Tom O’Grady, Jesse Perez, Michelle Pickett, Ronald Smith, Shannon Stoker, Jason Underwood, Manuel Valdez, Dan Wolfe, Megan Woodruff

**Members Excused:** Eric Armstrong, Nathan Birtell, Dara Little, Jennifer Manning, Anthony Preston, Andrew Rogers, Christina Sutcliffe

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

**Approval of January 12, 2023, Minutes:** Properly motioned and seconded (Pickett; Duncan); all in favor, none opposed. January minutes approved by voice vote.

**State Universities Retirement System Member Advisory Committee (SURSMAC)-Update:** Liz Guess brought the Council up-to-date from the committee’s beginning in the 1940’s to today as members anticipate a dissolution vote. The SursMac executive committee looked at the bylaws, past meeting notes and decided to propose that this advisory committee be dissolved, essentially because there has not been any activity in the past ten years.

The State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA) is state level; each campus has a local chapter. Ours is the NIU Annuitants Association (NIUAA) that takes an active role in the legislative process advocating for anyone who is in the state universities retirement system, active and retired employees. Guess encouraged members to consider joining the [NIUAA](#).

**University Committee Reports:**

**University Council:** Ismael Montana: Executive Vice President and Provost Ingram reported a 6% increase in full-time enrollment over last year and the period before the pandemic.

**Student Government Association (SGA)** No report.

**Operating Staff Council:** No Report.

**Faculty Senate:** Ishmael Montana: Guess and Chomentowski presented the information Guess shared today to ensure that faculty senate membership understood the implications of the possible dissolution of SURSMAC. The dissolution vote will be held this spring, March or April. Guess assured Dr. Montana that once more information about the meeting is known, it will be shared.

Also at the January meeting, Fred Williams, Senior Director of IT infrastructure, addressed the risk associated with cybercrimes against NIU and provided detailed information about the scope and also outlined various measures that can be taken to minimize the impact.

**Board of Trustees Committees:** No report.

**Board of Trustees:** Ismael Montana: The Board has not met. Next meeting is March 23. Once the Board meets, we should be able to have some kind of comprehensive report for the next meeting.

### **Vice-President's Report/Tom O'Grady:**

The **Athletic Board** announced hiring a new volleyball coach, Sondra Parys, who brings an impressive record from five seasons at Loyola University in Chicago. The Victor E. Bash will be virtual again, the week of May 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, including online auctions, special video events and the highly popular wine and spirits pull. There will be summer events in St. Charles, Rockford and Oak Brook, dates and locations to be announced. The new season ticket subscription plan has been released.

### **Campus Parking Committee/Shannon Stoker:**

The CPC had a robust discussion about giving students warning tickets the first few weeks of school, as a learning period before issuing actual tickets. The matter was tabled for further discussion in the future.

**Campus Security and Environmental Quality:** No report.

### **Parking Appeals Committee/LaBriann Carrington:**

January appeals: Twenty-one appeals approved; denied 17 and 2 fines reduced.

### **Student Conduct Advisory Board/Manuel Valdez:**

The board discussed some of the trends that are happening within student conduct, some of the collaboration tools that they are using. Also, the university is looking at 101 courses. There is a lot of feedback that students are not getting as much out of it as they hoped. The University is evaluating the course to update some of the student learning objectives.

### **Social Justice Committee/Felicia Bohanon:**

An issue this committee is continuing to look at is promotion and tenure across the university and how can the committee have an impact on that process. They are also looking at the impact that their group can have, particularly in terms of looking at curricular issues, and so those are issues that the social justice committee is continuing to work on.

### **SPS Council Committee Reports:**

#### **Advocacy/Melanie Costello:**

The committee discussed the process of position auditing and classifying. Joe did some research that is being reviewed. There are many layers of bureaucracy from the state level all the way to the university that goes into position auditing; how positions are audited and classified. Joe is continuing to look into that, relating it to the climate survey previously done. This is an area of concern for some SPS members, so the committee is working to bring some clarity and understanding to the process which might help alleviate some of that concern.

The committee also discussed specifically some of the data and comments from the survey. There were two concerns that are mentioned with frequency throughout the climate survey. One is that many members do work more than 37.5 hours a week and do more than as outlined in their job description, and, there is definitely a desire for more professional development among SPS members.

Former committee member, Andrew Rogers, passed on information about the challenges involved and areas where the university is falling short, which was reflected in the survey responses.

In light of the recent developments such as the supervisor sessions, the Staff Professional Development Academy and various other professional development opportunities. There are two aspects of professional development, job improvement and career development. The university seems to not be taking advantage of the development of their own employees to continue and move up in their career.

**Awards/Megan Woodruff:**

The committee has begun requesting nominations for the **Gary Gray Award**, which is for service to the SPS council. It is easy to nominate someone—just submit an email to me with some brief information about who you are nominating and why you feel they should be recognized for their awesome service to our council. Nomination form is on our website.

The committee is also seeking nominations for the five Supportive Professional Staff Awards: **Advocacy, Cultural Competency, Excellence in Supervision, Institutional Advancement and Partnership and Collaboration**. Nominating is an easy process, using a quick Qualtrics questionnaire. You do need to have your **nomination letter** and a **support nomination letter from somebody else** ready to upload. The deadline for all awards is **March 17**. If you have any questions, please send me an email: [meheather@niu.edu](mailto:meheather@niu.edu)

**Communications & Technology/Jason Underwood:**

We have been discussing several of the communication and technology projects presented at our November 2022 meeting. This week we sent a list to Felicia of potential website updates, including updates to information that's on the page, consolidating several of the pages together and including a page featuring our SPS personnel advisor. Felicia is working through those recommendations now, as well as some updated photos.

We are moving ahead with plans to develop a template and a process for a quarterly newsletter that is one of the things we talked about in the November meeting and seemed to be well received. We would have a quarterly SPS Council newsletter that would go by e-mail to all supportive professional staff employees. A link to the newsletter would be on the website.

We think much of the content could come from the activities of the Council. We will be checking with subcommittees and various members for specific features and ideas for the newsletter; as well as including retirements and new employees. We will be happy to have any questions or suggestions now or as we get that rolling. [junderwood@niu.edu](mailto:junderwood@niu.edu)

**Constitution & Elections/Tom O'Grady:** It's that time of year where election season is upon us.

We have fifteen members of the Council whose terms are up at the end of this year, and I'm hoping everyone will run again. I expect to send out some emails letting you know if you're one of the 15 whose terms is expiring. The goal is to have elections by the third week of April, so we are a little ahead of the game.

Not only do we have 15 vacancies, we have a lot of alternate spots that have not been filled, so there is a lot of opportunity for service and it would be great if we could reach out to our colleagues and engage them in getting more involved with the Council.

**Professional Development/Lupe Flores:** We met last week and considering we haven't had much success with feedback from everyone regarding what they want to see for professional development opportunities and I kind of think that we're all a little burnt out. We just decided that we are going to start sharing on-going professional development opportunities with the group.

**Regional and Community Relations/Shannon Stoker:** There are various events in DeKalb:

February 11: Street Stroll & Mardi Gras Celebration;

February 14: Kids pajama party and adult Salsa Dancing lessons;

February 16 Ellwood House Guide training;

February 18 Sandwich drag queen show and Daddy Daughter Dance at the DeKalb Park District;

February 25 Cracked Beer Expo at Fatties

Also, there will be two community meetings to elicit community input for a new mural being done by NIU alum. February 18 at 10:00 a.m. and February 22 at 6:00 p.m.

**Dependent Scholarship Fund/Ronald Smith:** The deadline for applying is extended to February 28 that has doubled the number of applicants—from 4 to 8. Felicia and I have had conversations with the NIU Foundation with the goal of increasing the endowment. Eric Armstrong is going to disseminate and share the information about the scholarship to over 600+ military connected students. Actions have taken place this year to increase the endowment and trying new avenues and be more consistent in how we promote and market the scholarship. Felicia added that in their meetings with the Foundation, they are looking at a March appeal that will go out to the university for contributions to the SPS Dependent Scholarship.

The minimal amount to have the scholarship endowed is \$25,000. There were also some ideas about individuals that we could go to in terms of possibly getting a larger contribution to make sure that over the next two years, which is really my goal, we would be at that mark.

Having no further business, President Bohanon adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

**Representatives:** Please contact our SPSC Secretary, Melanie Costello, ([melcostello@niu.edu](mailto:melcostello@niu.edu)) and SPSC Administrative Aide, Frances Mitchell, ([fmitchell@niu.edu](mailto: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,*

*Melanie Costello, Secretary  
Supportive Professional Staff Council*