Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, March 8, 2012
HSC Clara Sperling Skyroom
10:00 a.m.

Present: Nancy Apperson, Eric Biletzky, Cliff Bottiglieri, Karinne Bredberg, Joan Briscoe, Steve Builta, Neil Dickey, Dena Funkhouser, Dana Gautcher, Lesley Gilbert, Missy Gillis, Deborah Haliczer, Anne Hardy, Liz Harris, Ryan Harris, Gail Hayenga, Holly Holliday-Jones, Michael Kavulic, Julia Lamb, Todd Latham, Janet Love-Moore, Debra Miller, Jonathon Ostenburg, Scott Peska, Anne Petty-Johnson, Mark Pietrowski, Donna Smith, Kathy Smith, Michael Stang, Fred Williams, Rachel Xidis, and Rita Yusko

Excused: Pat Anderson, Salvatore Morreale, Tris Ottolino, Brian Walk and Phil Young

Absent: None

Guests: Tim Griffin, Joe Matty and Katie Wernberg

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Supportive Professional Staff Council President Todd Latham.

President Latham offered two amendments to the day’s agenda adding “Ombudsman” and “Establish Committee to Develop Survey Instrument for Distribution during Spring 2013” both under ‘New Business’. With no additional amendments, he asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda. The motion was made by D. Smith and was seconded by Petty-Johnson. The motion to approve the amended agenda was passed unanimously.

President Latham asked for corrections to the February 9, 2012, meeting minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Peska and was seconded by Apperson. The motion to approve the meeting minutes was passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

Guest Speakers

NIU Alumni Association Advocacy Program – Joe Matty and Katie Wernberg
President Latham welcomed Joe Matty, Assistant Vice President of University Advancement – Executive Director NIU Alumni Association, and Katie Wernberg, Assistant Director of Advocacy and Chicago Operations. Matty introduced himself and Wernberg and thanked Council for inviting them to talk about the NIU Alumni Association Advocacy program which was launched this past January. This free program seeks to recruit NIU alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends of the university to become advocates of NIU by staying in touch with their legislators about NIU priorities, concerns and successes. Matty shared handouts and a PowerPoint presentation describing the various aspects of the program and why it was established.

Following the presentation, the floor was opened for comments. Council asked for more clarification regarding how these advocates would be used and commitment required. Matty explained advocates should be willing to spend at least an hour a month contacting their legislators on NIU issues. Matty explained when individuals join the program, they are “geocoded” – sent information which is based upon their geographic permanent home
residence. Matty reminded Council the Alumni Association does not share their member lists with others. Council asked if member activities are tracked when members utilize the Advocacy database and Matty confirmed the Alumni Association can see who members are contacting, but they are not using it to spy on members.

Council addressed concerns regarding the ethical use of computers by employees for political activities, suggesting that member materials specifically state when and where state employees should contact legislators in order to adhere to Human Resources policies.

Wernberg announced there will be two sessions those interested in joining can attend to learn more about the program. The first session will be help on Saturday, March 10, 2012, from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m. and the second one on Monday, April 2, 2012, from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the NIU Naperville campus.

Matty asked Council to consider supporting the Alumni Association Advocacy Program by learning about the program and sharing the program's details with other SPS employees. He added that based upon Council advice, the office will clarify the handouts and when the program is ready to be launched to the whole campus, asks for the opportunity to return to Council with the revised documents. Matty and Wernberg again thanked Council for allowing them time to speak.

Announcements

A. SURES Event – Retirement Seminar: March 27, 28 or 29, 2012
   Haliczer told Council SURES will be hosting Retirement Seminars March 27 – 29, 2012. The appointments are now all full, but more may be held again in May. She said employees must be within two years of retirement to schedule a meeting and they can also be done over the phone.

B. SURES Event – SMP Education Seminars: March 8th, April 12th or May 24th, 2012
   Haliczer shared employees seeking counseling about the Self-Managed Plan can attend a session either March 8th, April 12 or May 24th.

C. SURES Event – Traditional/Portable Education Seminars
   Haliczer reported there are three workshops planned regarding the Tradition and Portable retirement plans. These workshops will be held April 11th, April 24th or May 22nd.

D. Pension Town Hall
   Haliczer reminded Council those who were unable to attend the March 7th ‘Pension Town Hall’ hosted by President Peters and Dr. Steven Cunningham are able to view the video and PowerPoint from the presentation on NIU’s ‘State Pension & Budget Update’ webpage. There are mechanisms in place to allow for feedback from employees.

E. SUAA Regional Meetings
   Council was advised the State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA) will be hosting their 2012 Regional Meeting on April 10th at Elgin Community College or April 13th at Moraine Valley Community College. Both meetings will run from 9:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

F. 2012 Leadership Summit
   President Latham shared a flyer announcing the 2012 Leadership Summit which will be held Thursday, March 22nd from 12 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. in the Altgeld Hall Auditorium. This even is being sponsored by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and Fifth Third Bank in celebration of Women’s History Month.
Committees of the Council

Awards
Gautcher announced the committee is working on final preparations for the SPS Awards Ceremony which will be held on Tuesday, April 17th from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the Duke Ellington Ballroom. The reception begins at 2 p.m. and the awards ceremony will start at 2:30 p.m. During the ceremony this year’s “SPS Presidential Award for Excellence” winners – Deborah Pierce, Jason Rhode, Michelle Pickett and SPSC President Latham – will all be recognized. Twenty-five to thirty “SPS Certificate of Recognition” winners – including Ottolino and Pietrowski – will also be recognized during the ceremony. The Awards committee will meet to select the other “Certificate of Recognition” recipients soon and will share the names with Council during the next meeting. Haliczer reminded Council that Gautcher and Hardy will also be recognized as this year’s “SPS Service Award” recipients.

Gautcher said all SPS employees will receive an email regarding the Awards ceremony, it will be included on the SPSC webpage and will be included in the NIU Today news.

Communications
Xidis reported more Council members received training on the Cascade Server. She asked members who had been a part of the Ad hoc newsletter committee to email her if they wish to remain on the Communications committee. She said the committee’s next project will be working on updating the SPSC brochure.

She also noted the SPSC newsletter was sent to all SPS employees and is seeking any comments. Many Council reported they liked the newsletter, but a few missed the email introducing it. Xidis asked Council to send D. Smith any topic ideas or suggestions for future editions. It is the goal of Council to have the newsletter sent to employees three times a year.

Constitution & Elections
Stang reminded Council that with Samantha Fisher’s departure, there was a representative vacancy on the University Benefits Committee. Two Council expressed interest in filling the vacancy – Bottigliero and Petty-Johnson. Members were asked to vote on the replacement. Bottigliéro was selected as the new representative to complete Fisher’s term.

Stang reminded Council that Friday, March 9th will be the last day for SPS nominations for Council elections. He noted there are currently no nominations from Division 6 and asked for assistance in finding employees willing to serve.

Events
Hardy reminded Council there is a Brown Bag Luncheon planned for Wednesday, April 4th from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in the Holmes Student Center Diversions Lounge presenting on Vision 2020 Student Engagement and Student Experience initiatives. The email announcing the event will be sent to employees soon.

Finance
Funkhouser announced there is still approximately $1,000 left in the budget. She said she knows fees for printing a new SPSC brochure will be taken from the remainder and asks other committees to let her know their funding needs soon.

Legislative Issues
Peska noted the committee asked Matty and Wernberg to come speak to Council about their Advocacy Program and thinks the partnership could be a good one for Council. But, he stated in speaking with them, he told them there will be some times Council might not be able to assist them because of university conflicts.
**Technology Resources**
There was no report from Technology Resources this month.

**Workplace Issues**
Lamb reported the committee is in a holding pattern on projects such as SPS Temporary Employee Benefits and Supervisor training while HR works on pensions. She asked Council to review the ‘SPS Statement on Professional Ethics’ as it needs to be updated. She asked members to send any corrections/additions to Lamb or K. Smith.

Lamb reminded Council to be mindful of the wellness of fellow colleagues during this time as many are experiencing stress over pensions, workloads and other concerns. She suggested Council consider establishing a Blackboard group so all committees can share information which may be helpful to others.

**Vice President**
D. Smith reminded Council to review her report which was submitted before the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Wellness Fair**
Hardy reported she has enough Council members who have agreed to volunteer at the table during the Wellness Fair and has sent those individuals a reminder. She stated she just needs to decide what should be on the SPSC table to give Council a good presence.

**B. Merit Committee**
President Latham asked Council to seriously think about what should be considered for a valid measure of merit for employees. Council was asked to speak with colleagues for their input and to send findings to either he or Stang. He would like to have something ready to present by April.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Faculty and Staff Appreciation Day/Events**
During the February meeting, President Latham asked Council to think of things to help make Athletics’ “Faculty and Staff Appreciation Day” events better attended and more meaningful to employees. Suggestions included:
- Let faculty and staff know the date of the event when schedules are announced. Don’t wait until a week or two before the event.
- Make it a meaningful event and not one just seen to be happening to fill seats because student attendance is expected to be low.
- Acknowledge individuals during the events (i.e. Presidential Award winners, Council or Commission members, etc….)
- Remember that weekend events, where employees can possibly bring their family will likely do better than a weekday event.

**B. Posting Board**
Peska asked Council thoughts about establishing an electronic resource where employees could post items to sell, post ideas to share with others, announce opportunities, etc… APAC has one for items and he believes this would not only be useful to those on campus, but also those at satellite locations.

The floor was opened for comments. Some wondered if such a resource would be utilized, as there might’ve been such a tool created a while back that was not well used.
It was debated if whether or not a Facebook page might work better, as some employees do not use Blackboard. President Latham asked Council to send any thoughts or suggestions to Peska.

C. Establish Committee to Develop Survey Instrument for Distribution during Spring 2013
President Latham made a motion to establish a committee to develop a survey instrument for SPS employee distribution during the Spring of 2013 and name Haliczer as Chair. The motion was seconded by Ostenburg. **The motion to approve the formation of the survey committee and name Haliczer as Chair was passed unanimously.**

D. Ombudsman
President Latham asked Council for any thoughts/opinions regarding the Office of the Ombudsman and consideration on supporting the need for the office. Many recognize and value the confidentiality and neutrality of the office, which is viewed by many as an asset not only to employees, but students as well. Concerns were raised of where faculty, staff and students would be able to go for advice if the office is eliminated in the future. A few Council members stated closing the office would further lower employee morale on campus and would be a mark against a university which strives to be a “student-centered” institution.

After much discussion, a motion was made by Apperson to offer SPSC support of the Office of the Ombudsman. The motion was seconded by Pietrowski. **The motion to offer SPSC support of the Office of the Ombudsman was passed unanimously.** Council asked President Latham to communicate this support to President Peters and University Council.

University Committee Reports
President Latham asked Council to review the University Committee Reports for Faculty Senate, Board of Trustees, University Council and Operating Staff Council which were submitted via email before the meeting. If anyone has questions, he asked to please email him.

Adjournment
President Latham made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ostenburg. **The motion was passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.**

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by
Lesley Gilbert, SPSC Secretary