Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, November 21, 2013
HSC Clara Sperling Skyroom
10:00 a.m.

Present:  Pat Anderson, Eric Biletzky, Cliff Bottigliero, Steve Builta, Melissa Burlingame, Alicia Czachowski, Abigail Dean, Catherine Doederlein, Dena Funkhouser, Dana Gautcher, Megan Gerken, Lesley Gilbert, Deborah Haliczer, Anne Hardy, Emily Hochstatter, Betsy Hull, Gail Jacky, Marti Jernberg, Gillian King-Cargile, Julia Lamb, Janet Love-Moore, Jeanne Meyer, Sheila Milan, Debra Miller, Kiera Miller, Ted Moen, Randi Napientek, Susan Oppenborn, Anne Petty-Johnson, Nyoka Polyak, Donna Schoenfeld, Gail Schumacher, Donna Smith, Kathy Smith, Nicole Stroobants, Brian Walk, and Rachel Xidis

Excused:  Dan House, Michael Stang, and Christina Sutcliffe

Absent:  None

Guests:  Steven Cunningham, Sarah Klaper, Celeste Latham, Margee Myles, Andy Small, Jennifer Such, Toni Tollerud, and Eric Weldy

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Supportive Professional Staff Council President Deborah Haliczer.

President Haliczer made two additions to the agenda under ‘Announcements’ adding, “G. Forward, Together Forward Scholarship” and “H. New Employee”. She asked for further additions to the agenda. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda. The motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Lamb and was seconded by Anderson. The motion to approve the amended agenda was passed unanimously.

President Haliczer asked if there were corrections to the October 10, 2013 minutes. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Doederlein and was seconded by Lamb. The motion to approve the October 10, 2013 minutes was passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

President Haliczer announced guest HR speakers, Dr. Steven Cunningham and Celeste Latham, would arrive later in the meeting so she continued with the announcements.

Announcements
A. Ethics Training Update
President Haliczer reported the Ethics Training period is over for another year. She thanked everyone for completing the training and noted that out of 8,266 employees, only 18 did not complete the training by the deadline.

B. Philippines Relief Fund Opportunities
Lamb shared a flyer with events planned to help with Philippines relief fundraising efforts for Typhoon Haiyan. She announced on Sunday, November 24th from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. there will be a fundraising dinner held at the Oak Crest – DeKalb Area Retirement Center hosted by the NIU Filipino-American Association, NIU Asian American Center and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Donations from the event will go to the Red Cross to help with Typhoon Haiyan Relief projects.
Council also discussed efforts to assist those affected by the tornadoes which devastated Washington, IL and other Illinois cities in recent weeks.

C. IHSA State Football Championship Volunteers
Dean announced volunteers are still needed for the IHSA State Football Championship games which will be held at Huskie Stadium on November 29th and 30th. Those interested in volunteering were asked to go to www.IHSADestinationDeKalb.com for more information.

D. CSEAS Host Families
Lamb also reported that because of a grant received by the U.S. State Department, 60 high school students from Southeast Asia will be coming to NIU for one week in April, as part of the Southeast Asian Youth Leadership Program. As such, they are in need of Host families for the students. She asked Council to share the information with fellow colleagues. As she receives more information, she will share it with Council.

E. Meals on Wheels
President Haliczer said she has been contacted by the Voluntary Action Center (VAC) seeking volunteers to assist with the “Meals on Wheels” program for DeKalb. She said at this time of the year many of their regular volunteers leave town. President Haliczer asked the Events committee to brainstorm ways SPS Council and employees can assist VAC with this program.

F. Pension Reform
President Haliczer thanked everyone who attended the “Forum on Pensions” on November 20th in the Carl Sandburg Auditorium and she gave special thanks to Andy Small, Alan Rosenbaum and Pat Erickson for planning the event. Council discussed the concerns and frustrations expressed by employees across campus regarding pensions, which was part of the reason for planning the event. More than 400 employees attended the events hosted over the lunch hour. Council were asked to remain vigilant as there is speculation Legislators will be returning to Springfield in early December to vote on a pension deal, which has yet to be shared. Council was asked to be ethically minded when sharing pension communications with fellow employees.

G. Forward, Together Forward Scholarship
Hardy reported the December 2nd application deadline for the “Forward, Together Forward Scholarship” is fast approaching. If Council members have been asked to write recommendation letters for students, the deadline for submitting recommendation letters is Monday, December 9th. Those needing more information regarding the award were asked to contact her.

H. New Staff Member
President Haliczer announced Gilbert has joined her office and she is excited to have her as a new member of the staff. Gilbert discussed the change made to her office and thanked Haliczer for the warm welcome and shared she is excited as well to be able to work with more employees across campus. Haliczer noted many changes have been made across campus and she reported HR is working on ways to help employees address these changes.

I. NIU Gamelan Open House
Lamb shared there will be an NIU Gamelan Open House on Monday, December 2nd from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. in the Boutell Hall Lobby in the Music Building.
Committees of the Council

Awards
Czachowski reminded Council the nomination deadline for the “SPS Presidential Excellence Award” is Monday, December 2nd and no nominations have yet been received. She shared a proposal from the committee seeking to add the “Distinguished” title to “SPS Presidential Excellence Award” recipients after a period of four years, would apply to former and future awardees. The proposal also seeks to create four new awards focusing on practice and service:

- The Supportive Professional Staff Award for Excellence in Supervision
- The Supportive Professional Staff Award for Institutional Advancement
- The Supportive Professional Staff Award for Advocacy
- The Supportive Professional Staff Award for Cultural Competency

Czachowski and Gautcher clarified these awards would not be monetary, but the winner would receive a plaque and be recognized during the Spring SPS Awards Ceremony in April. During discussion amendments were made to the proposal clarifying each award can only be won once and allowing the Awards committee to create other awards in the future. The motion to approve the amended proposal to add a “Distinguished” title to SPS Presidential Excellence Award winners after four years, to create four new awards and giving the Awards committee the ability to create more awards in the future was made by Hardy and was seconded by Lamb. The motion to approve the amended proposal passed unanimously.

Gautcher informed Council the Awards Committee is holding two days next April for the SPS Awards Ceremony pending approval of a date from President Baker - Tuesday, April 15, 2014 or Wednesday, April 16, 2014. Once a date is confirmed they will share it with Council.

Communications
Xidis shared the newsletter went out in October and Council discussed all of the wonderful comments received from employees across campus. Small noted the SPS and Operating Staff article was a well-written, unbiased article and he shared it with the State Civil Service Office in Springfield.

Constitution & Elections
Jacky reported for Stang, who was unable to attend the meeting. She began by announcing a special election was held in Division 5 to fill the currently vacant Alternate position and to replenish the pool of employees in case of another vacancy. Lisa Pluhm received the most votes and will complete the vacancy through June 30, 2014. Pluhm will serve as Alternate to Gilbert. Jacky made the motion to approve Lisa Pluhm to Division 5 as the Alternate to Gilbert. The motion was seconded by Petty-Johnson. The motion to approve Pluhm to Division 5 Alternate was approved unanimously.

Jacky shared Council received a request to select an SPS representative for the Provost Search Committee. There were 5 nominees and 4 who were interested in serving – Catherine Doederlein, Dana Gautcher, Betsy Hull and Sandi Splansky. Due to time constraints the vote was held during the Executive Committee meeting and Doederlein was selected to serve. D. Smith made a motion to approve Doederlein to serve as the SPS representative on the Provost Search Committee. K. Smith seconded the motion. The motion to approve Doederlein to serve as the SPS representative on the Provost Search Committee was approved, with Doederlein abstaining from the vote.

Council was reminded the committee will be reviewing the SPS Constitution and bringing changes before Council in January, everyone was asked to review the document.
Events
Burlingame thanked the Communications committee for their assistance in sending Event details to employees. She reported the Tailgate event went well and reminded members there are two events remaining for the semester. The ‘Microelectronics Research and Development Lab Tours’ are November 25th and 26th and both are full. On December 4th is the “Lunch & Learn: Cloud Technology” session in the Founders Memorial Library. She said instead of planning the SPS Holiday Open House for December, the committee has decided instead to host a “New Year’s Celebration” on Wednesday, January 8, 2014 from 3 – 4:30 p.m. with the location still to be determined.

Love-Moore opened discussions to see if Council would be interested in forming a team to assist with next year’s “NIU Cares Day” which is planned for Saturday, April 12, 2014. She added the planners need assistance in finding enough volunteer sites, as they often have more volunteers than sites. After much discussion, Love-Moore made a motion to have the Events Committee coordinate communications with SPS employees to find volunteer sites and SPS volunteers for NIU Cares Day. The motion was seconded by Meyer. The motion for the Events committee to coordinate communications with SPS employees to find volunteer sites and SPS volunteers for the NIU Cares Day event was passed unanimously.

Finance
Funkhouser said her committee received a request from the SPS Scholarship Committee for $346.77 to pay for the printing of a mailing to solicit donations for this year. Funkhouser made a motion to expend $346.77 to print the SPS Scholarship donation letter, which was seconded by Anderson. The motion to expend $346.77 for the printing of the SPS Scholarship donation letter was passed unanimously.

Legislative Issues
Bottiglieri shared Legislators are expected to return to Springfield in early December for a special session to possibly vote on Pension reform. He reminded all Council to be alert and watch the news.

SPS Dependent Scholarship
Hardy thanked Council for the approval to print the donation letters which will be sent to all SPS employees and to SPS Annuitants. She said three donations have been received since the last meeting and she again challenged all Council members to make a donation to the SPS Scholarship Fund. The donation letter is expected to be mailed in early December. She the account has a balance of $2, 443 and reminded Council $25,000 is needed to endow the scholarship.

Technology Resources
Biletzky asked for a show of hands to make sure all Council members received the email regarding the recent survey in Vibe. No problems were reported. He encouraged everyone to attend the “Cloud Technology Lunch and Learn” session on December 4th.

Workplace Issues
K. Smith reported the committee is still waiting on the SPS survey results from earlier in the year. President Haliçzer said she will get them to the committee soon. K. Smith added the committee is looking forward to an update on the status of 9+3 and 10+2 odd contract employees. She invited members to their committee meeting which will be held on November 22nd.

Committees of the University
Vice President

A. Committee Summary Report
Hardy said the information from her report is posted on Vibe and asked Council to review the information and to contact her with any questions.

B. Committee on Multicultural Curriculum Transformation - Alternate
Hardy shared it was suggested D. Smith have an alternate for the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation committee meetings. Hardy made a motion to nominate Jernberg as alternate. The motion was seconded by Love-Moore. **The motion to approve Jernberg as alternate for D. Smith on the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation committee was approved, with Jernberg abstaining from the vote.**

C. Bold Futures Workshop
Due to the length of the meeting, Hardy asked to table until December’s meeting follow-up discussion on thoughts by Council who participated in the “Bold Futures” workshops.

OLD BUSINESS

D. Guest Speakers for 2014
President Haliczer said Sean Frazier, NIU Athletic Director, contacted her to say he might not be able to attend the December Council meeting as NIU is preparing to go to a Bowl game. She said if he is unable to attend, he will schedule for another meeting in the Spring. She reminded Council Tom Phillips, NIU Police Chief, is also scheduled to come before Council this Spring.

E. December 23rd
Council was reminded to make sure fellow colleagues understand the university will be closed on December 23rd as a mandatory vacation day. All employees received the official notification with enough time to have been able to save a day of vacation. Employees can’t assume if they do not have vacation time saved that they can automatically borrow time from the next pay period. If employees or supervisors have questions, they should contact K. Smith.

F. CIO, Provost and CFO Searches
President Haliczer reminded Council there are searches on-going for CIO, Provost and CFO. As she is able, she will share information about the status of each search.

NEW BUSINESS

A. SPS Emeritus Status Proposal
President Haliczer introduced Norden Gilbert, Retiree, who would like for Council to consider a proposal for “SPS Emeritus” status and shared a copy of a document for “Faculty Emeritus” as a guide. N. Gilbert shared how the Faculty Emeritus status keeps faculty formally connected to NIU, but currently there is no such process for SPS employees. He is seeking a way to formalize connections for SPS employees (who would choose to seek the title) to remain formally connected to NIU. This would also be a perk to recognize SPS employees for their distinguished work. He said this would be a title only and would not carry benefits. After much discussion, President Haliczer appointed an ad hoc committee comprised of Norden Gilbert, Dana Gautcher, Kathy Smith, Toni Tollerud and herself to review and work on an SPS Emeritus proposal to bring back to Council.
University Committee Reports
President Haliczer reported her reports have been placed in Vibe and asked Council to review the documents. If there are any questions or concerns, she asked members to contact her.

Guest Speaker
President Haliczer welcomed Dr. Steven Cunningham and Celeste Latham to the meeting. Cunningham thanked Council for the return invitation. Cunningham began by giving a brief update on pensions. He stated it does appear Legislators will be going back to Springfield on December 3rd to review and possibly vote on a pension bill. He advised all employees to stay alert and said HR will make sure all Council leaders have the most up-to-date pension information to help keep their constituents advised.

Cunningham answered questions clarifying the hiring-freeze, which is not really a freeze. He stated President Baker wanted the opportunity to review job positions and hires to make sure university priorities are being met.

Cunningham then talked about employees working odd contracts (10+2 or 9+3 months). He shared he and Latham did review this information for Council and identified about 18 – 20 employees with one of these contracts. It was their belief the extra months is work being done which is different than the employee’s regular job. Many examples were provided by Council that suggest otherwise. Cunningham and Latham said they would contact Dr. Lisa Freeman to look at each of these cases more closely.

Cunningham discussed the reclassifications of SPS positions to Civil Service and began by providing history of how the SPS system was established. He shared NIU was very cautious in assigning SPS positions, but as the Civil Service system updated their classifications for Civil Service positions, when the audit occurred many SPS positions were flagged as they now fell under the updated classifications. He said about 95% of the flagged positions were because of the reclassifications. It was clarified that no SPS employees currently in a flagged position will be changing status while they hold that position. But, once that position is vacated it will be converted to the correct Civil Service position. If departments or employees have questions about these changes, they were asked to contact Latham so she can directly answer assist employees.

Cunningham was asked if employees would be receiving increments. Cunningham shared the President is reviewing this, but there must be preparations made for possible pending FY15 budget issues. All budget possibilities must be reviewed before a decision on increments can be made. A comment was raised that employees would like to know if increments are even being considered and added when employees hear no news regarding raises, this adds to poor morale on campus.

Haliczer thanked Cunningham and Latham for attending the meeting and thanked Latham for her assistance with the SPS and Civil Service article in the SPS newsletter.

Adjournment
With no further business, President Haliczer adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by
Lesley Gilbert, SPSC Secretary