Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, November 20, 2008
Heritage Room, 10:00 A.M.

Present

Guests
Jan Gerenstein, Tim Griffin, Jim Lockard, Jay Monteiro

Absent
Dan House

I. Call to Order
SPS Council President Bobbie Cesarek called the meeting to order and thanked Holmes Student Center staff who set up the room at the last minute.

A. The agenda was approved with the following additions:
   Announcements—d) new name for NASLGUC and e) overdue SPS evaluations.

B. A motion was made and seconded to approve the October 9, 2008, minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Guests.
A. Committee representatives.
   1. Jan Gerenstein, Computing Facilities Advisory Committee. Gerenstein reported that the committee meets four times a year. The committee is an advisory group to Walter Czerniak, associate vice president, Information Technology Services (ITS), and works with ITS staff on major initiatives. Latham noted that Gerenstein is one of the best SPS representatives when it comes to reporting to the Council and suggested that Council members could contact her directly with issues.

   2. Judy Santacaterina, Committee on Multicultural Curriculum Transformation. Santacaterina stated that the committee hosts, promotes, and directs the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute. They are currently taking applications; the forms are available at the committee’s website with a December 18, 2008, deadline. Each summer about 20-25 people attend the week-long institute. Attendees are encouraged to discuss how they would change their syllabi to include diverse groups.

   3. Phil Young, Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee. Young reported that the committee met recently after being on a hiatus after February 14. Committee members discussed the purpose of the committee and determined that they would start meeting again on a regular basis. Cesarek noted that Paul Stoddard helped facilitate the committee’s first meeting. In general, the committee discusses environmental issues such as tree removal, cracked sidewalks, and marked crosswalks. Committee members also discuss issues of public safety and Chief Grady will be invited to a future meeting.
Apperson noted that some university vehicles are driving on the sidewalks creating a hazard for pedestrians. Young stated that this was also brought to the committee last year as a concern about the impact to the sidewalks.

4. Dana Gautcher, Parking Appeals Committee. Gautcher reported that anyone receiving a ticket has 10 days to appeal. The appeals that are not handled directly by the director of Parking Services go to the Parking Appeals Committee, which meets weekly. She said that there is a perception that the Parking Services office likes to write tickets, which is false. They spend their time educating employees and trying to change behaviors that may result in tickets. Parking Services is also aware of the implications of ticketing during high traffic times such as Move-in Days and the week when students are moving out.

5. Michelle Pickett, Unity in Diversity Steering Committee. Pickett reported that the committee meets monthly during the academic year and among their responsibilities is holding several contests, including the poster contest. One of the great aspects of the committee is providing funds for student groups who would like to provide programming related to diversity.

6. Jonathan Ostenburg, Judicial Review Board. Ostenburg reported that members of the Judicial Review Board are called to serve when a student appeals a judicial action. However, SPS may not serve on a hearing panel if the issue is related to academic misconduct.

7. Donna Smith, Baccalaureate Review Task Force. Smith reported that this is a new committee, and is one of the results of the strategic plan as well as a team visit to a general education institute sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The task force met recently, with President Peters speaking to the group on the importance of the work they would be doing. Data will be collected in a couple of ways: focus groups and a web survey similar to the one done for the future of Cole Hall. Late this year or early next year, task force members will be receiving training in how to lead a focus group to maintain the reliability of data collected. All constituents of the university will be invited to provide feedback as well as members of the broader university community such as employers and alumni.

8. Abby Chemers, University Benefits Committee. Chemers reported that the committee meets five to eight times a year. They report to Peters. They look at benefits and what should be changed, e.g., revising the bereavement leave policy. The NIU Annuitants Association is involved in the committee and provides the committee with good information with regards to retirement benefits. Chemers suggested that anyone interested in joining the NIUAA to contact Lee Anne Henry and that dues may be paid with payroll deduction. Recent issues discussed were the opposition to a constitution convention and informing departments on what may or may not be offered to non-nationals upon employment.

B. Jim Lockard, representative to the State University Retirement System Member Advisory Council (SURA MAC). Cesarek reported that she recently found out about SURA MAC and that there are two NIU representatives, Judy Burgess for operating staff, and Jim Lockard for faculty. Since historically SPS were considered faculty no rank, the faculty representative also represents them. Also, NIU only is allowed two representatives under the SURA MAC structure. Lockard reported that SURA was established in 1941 and up until 1953 the only university that had direct access to SURA was the University of Illinois. Since then, it was asked that all universities become involved and the SURA MAC was established, with members from each institution participating in SURA. Members at each university can be elected or appointed; at NIU they are appointed. Lockard was appointed by Steve Cunningham about four years ago. He noted that there is no line of reporting set up in any SURA or SURA MAC document and there is a lack of ways to communicate with constituents. They meet two times a year and receive a report from SURA including the latest funding information. The SURA staff is good about making themselves
available during the meetings to answer questions and address concerns. Campus representatives are welcome to communicate to SURS what are the issues on their campuses. The meeting also consists of updates on legislative issues and benefits. Discussion followed regarding the state’s underfunding of SURS and SURS’s assets. Lockard noted that the return on investment for those in the traditional plan is much better than individuals can get on their own. Ostenburg asked how one could tell what plan they are in and Lockard replied that any state employee may visit the SURS website and if one is in the traditional plan they are able to use the estimator. He stated that the other plans, the portable and self-managed plans, are new. Any employee who did not switch to those plans is in the traditional plan. Mueller reported that the annual statement, which is due out in November, will be sent out in December. Lockard will provide Cesarek with the latest SURS MAC materials for her to forward to Council members.

III. Announcements

A. Ethics Training. The deadline for completion was extended to November 26 due to glitches in the system early on in the training.

B. Constitutional Convention, defeated. Cesarek made the announcement.

C. Current SPS numbers: 885, including temporary.

D. New name for NASULGC. On April 1, 2009, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), will be called Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU).

E. Overdue evaluations. Cesarek reported that there will be soon be a posting from Cunningham regarding overdue evaluations.

IV. Committees of the Council

A. Awards
Gautcher reported that December 3, 2008, is the deadline for the SPS Presidential Awards. Cesarek asked Council members to encourage nominations and noted that there is a monetary award for the recipients. There was only one application for the SPS Faculty Development Grant.

B. Communications
No report.

C. Constitution and Elections
No report.

D. Events
Chapman reported that the recent Between Hours was attended by 19 people. There was a $2 charge for dessert and beverages. She reported that Haliczer did a nice presentation on the issues the Workplace Issues group is working on. The committee is planning for a couple more in the spring. Speakers for future events were discussed and Gilbert suggested Lockard.

E. Finance
No report.

F. Legislative
No report.

G. Technology Resources
Ostenburg reported that HRS is changing the business unit classification codes for SPS employees, but added that it shouldn’t affect the work he does for the Council as long as coding is consistent.

H. Workplace Issues
Mandatory supervisory training and temporary SPS was discussed. Cesarek reported that she began a draft of a memo to Peters regarding the Council’s support of mandatory supervisory training. The memo will include recommendations to add soft skills to the training as well as the request that training start at the top and work down to include supervisors of student workers. Clark spoke to the issues of temporary SPS. She reported that they are not eligible for automatic increments and sabbaticals. Also, their vacation benefits do not accrue; they must use their vacation time by the end of each fiscal year. This is especially problematic in offices where temporary SPS cannot find the time to use their vacation benefit and/or the supervisor is unwilling to let them use their time. She added that another issue is that often temporary SPS are unaware of what their benefits are, including termination rights, i.e., 30-day notice of termination. Another issue is employees who have had temporary status for a length of time, some for as long as 20 years. Discussion followed regarding the different categories of temporary employees, including, but not limited to, athletics, development, and employees on grants, and how to better inform temporary SPS regarding their benefits. It was decided that more information on temporary employees is needed before the Council can make any recommendations on their behalf. Cesarek stated that she will bring up the issue when she meets with Cunningham.

I. Vice President
Latham reported that he is preparing a list of the committees with SPS representatives and the contact information to post to the SPSC website.

V. Old Business
A. February 14 “Day of Reflection.”
Cesarek reported that the remembrance for February 14 will be called “Day of Reflection.” The day will begin on Saturday, February 14, 2009, at 10:30 at the Convocation Center with a variety of remembrance activities. In the evening there will be a candlelight vigil. Throughout the day there will be activities at the Student Center, including activities for the families of the victims. The artist’s rendering of the memorial will also be unveiled that day.

B. Constitutional Amendment.
Remains tabled.

VI. New Business
A. Campus Parking Committee opening. Cesarek reported that she will be getting more information on the committee before filling the opening.

B. Council of Councils. Cesarek reported that the Operating Staff Councils in the state have been holding these for a number of years, where they get together and discuss the issues facing state university civil service employees. She is working with Monteiro to identify her counterparts at the other state universities and would like to see a Council of Councils for SPS (aka Administrative Professionals) in the spring.
She asked Council members to think about what would be pertinent to include on the agenda for such a meeting.

VII. University Committee Reports  
A. BOT. Cesarek noted that the report from the Legislative, Audit and External Affairs BOT committee is forthcoming.  
B. Faculty Senate report. Cesarek reported that one concern of this body is part of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act and the requirement that titles and costs of required textbooks be posted with the course listing during registration.

VIII. Adjournment  
The meeting was adjourned at 12:00.

Minutes submitted by Donna Smith, SPSC secretary.