Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, December 11, 2008
Sky Room, 10:00 A.M.

Present

Guests
Jay Monteiro, Angie Vargas

Absent
Sam Baker, Cliff Bottigliero, Dana Gautcher, Dan House, Grant Olson

I. Call to Order
SPS Council President Bobbie Cesarek called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

A. A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda with the following additions:
   Announcements:
   F. Appreciative Inquiry Workshop
   G. Civil Service Audit
   Motion passed unanimously.

B. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2008, meeting with a correction to Section II.A.2.: changing “current” to “currently.”
   Motion passed unanimously.

   Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Announcements
A. Words of Inspiration: Nikki Giovanni: January 14, 2009
   Nikki Giovanni is an English professor at Virginia Tech and well-known poet. She will be at NIU for two sessions. There will be a 2:00 p.m. session for faculty and staff in the Carl Sandberg Auditorium and a 7:00 p.m. session for students in the Duke Ellington Ballroom.

B. Holiday Insurance/Pay Check Timing
   Haliczer reported that Steve Cunningham’s memo dated December 2, 2008, contains important information pertaining to insurance procedures and payroll distributions during the university’s winter closure period.

C. January 2, 2009: Required Vacation Day
   Haliczer reminded Council members that January 2, 2009, is a scheduled university closure and employees must use vacation benefits or take the day without pay. She added that there is a form employees may complete to take the day without pay.

D. GroupWise Usage From Home
Haliczer announced that you can install GroupWise on your home computer, which gives you a quicker access to your e-mail at home versus logging in via the Internet.

Ostenberg stated you need to go to the ITS website, click under e-mail, then faculty and staff, and download GroupWise client. Or you may also download it by going to the ITS website, then choosing the correct software. This software can be downloaded onto your home computer, your laptop, etc. If you happen to have Microsoft Vista, you’ll need to download the software from a CD. If you have any questions please call the ITS help desk at 815-753-8100. Please note, however, that the only way to access archives is from the office computer.

E. January Guest Speaker: Steve Cunningham (2 hours)
Cesarek reported that Steve Cunningham will be a guest speaker at the January 2009 SPSC meeting. He will be speaking about various topics such as evaluations, mandatory supervisory training, and temporary SPS. Cesarek asked Council members to let her know if they have topics they would like to have addressed.

F. Appreciative Inquiry Workshop
The Appreciative Inquiry Workshop is scheduled for January 9, 2009, from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. in the Holmes Student Center Regency Room. This is for all faculty and staff. This is sponsored by Faculty Development and their website has additional information, including registration information.

G. Civil Service Audit
Haliczer reported that the civil service audit for NIU will take place December 15 - December 18, 2008. She explained that a random sample of employees across classifications is called in during this audit to be interviewed. A letter has been sent all SPS employees who have been selected, to explain the audit process.

III. Committees of the Council
A. Awards
Haliczer announced that there were 14 nominations for the SPS Presidential Award. This is more than there have been in the last two years. There is a good mix of people from various departments within the university. The committee will meet next week to review the nomination packets and a decision will be made on Thursday. Then the Council will vote on the results at the January Council meeting, Cesarek will submit the results to President Peters, and he will either accept or make additional recommendation(s). The four recipients will then be notified, and the remaining employees who were nominated will also be notified.

Haliczer also asked Council members to start thinking about nominations for the SPS Council Award for February.

B. Communications
No report.

C. Constitution and Elections
Gilbert reported they hope to have a recommendation by the next SPS Council meeting relative to the constitutional amendment that may allow the Council president to appoint a person if there is a vacancy outside of the time when regular committee appointments are made.

D. Events
No report.
E. Finance
Council members were asked to please let Chemers know of any anticipated expenses.

F. Legislative
It was reported that the governor had requested the universities to reserve 2.5% of their budgets. It is hoped that the legislature will make progress toward a capital budget and that there is potential for borrowing at the state level. A couple of reports from the Illinois Board of Higher Education were mentioned: Dual credit for high school/community colleges and 2008 Measuring Up Report. These reports are available at the IBHE website.

G. Technology Resources
No report.

H. Workplace Issues
Perkins reported on the issues the committee continues to discuss. He also noted that during his trip to Europe and Africa (December 22, 2008-March 1, 2009), Clark will join Benson as co-chair of the committee. Issues mentioned were:

1. Employee evaluations: Human Resource has received a great response.
2. Mandatory supervisor training: copy of a letter of support has been sent to Peters.
3. Temporary employee issues: More data is being compiled on this issue.
4. Tuition waiver procedures: This issue still needs to be presented to the Board of Trustees.
5. Communication: Alternative and/or additional ways to communicate to constituents are being discussed. One option is a newsletter, which could be done either via e-mail and/or paper copy. The Operating Staff Council's newsletter is a paper copy, but this is because a large percentage of operating staff do not have access to e-mail at work. All SPS employees by the nature of their positions should have access to e-mail, therefore, an electronic format would possibly work best, similar to the electronic format of the Northern Today.

I. Vice President
Latham gave an update on various committees.
1. Athletics. The Mid American Conference has asked NIU to participate in the Basketball Enhancement Program. During the first quarter of FY 09 changes were made to several ticket plans in response to the economy to make attendance more affordable. There was also discussion that events may be impeding athletes to have proper study time.
2. Campus Parking. It was reported that recent changes seem to be making this committee ineffective. Young noted that it is similar to the Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee in that decisions are being made outside of the committee.
3. SPS Development Grant was awarded to Patricia Wallace, Department of Psychology.

IV. Old Business
A. Constitutional Amendment
This will remain tabled until the February SPSC meeting. In the meantime, the committee will work on the amendment.
B. Sabbaticals
It was reported that Stang did research on sabbaticals for the SPS equivalent at other Illinois universities and the committee prepared a draft revision to the existing policy. It was suggested that a survey could be done to help determine what are obstacles for SPS employees in pursuing sabbaticals. Incentives for completing the survey were discussed and Lux made a motion, seconded by Apperson, to put $100 towards incentives and leave it up to the committee to determine what those should be. Motion passed unanimously. The committee should have the proposal finalized for the Council no later than the March meeting.

C. Grievance Procedures
Haliczer noted that the Ad Hoc Committee met to review the University Grievance Procedure and realized that a procedure for Termination for Cause Procedure is not included. The committee is meeting in January again and they have two options: (1) draft a stand alone procedure for Termination for Cause or (2) incorporate the SPS procedure for Termination for Cause into the existing University Grievance Procedure.

V. New Business
There was no new business.

VI. University Committee Reports
A. Board of Trustees, Legislative, Audit, and External Affairs Committee. Cesarek pointed out that the Higher Education Reauthorization Act has been renamed the Higher Education Opportunity Act. One part of that law that affects universities is the requirement that the books required for courses as well as the costs be posted when class are posted for registration, “to the maximum extent practicable.”

B. Faculty Senate. No report.

C. University Council. Items of note:
1. Resource Space and Budget Committee. They discussed Kishwaukee Hall being damaged by flood waters and not being usable, but there are no funds to demolish or refurbish it.
2. Changes are being made in graduation. There will be three total ceremonies, two ceremonies for undergraduates and a separate ceremony for graduates.
3. February 14 anniversary. There will be events ongoing throughout the day including a remembrance ceremony, art exhibit, scholarship lunch, and candlelight vigil.

VII. Other Business
There was a brief follow-up discussion on ethics training.

VIII. Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Angie Vargas, recording secretary and Donna Smith, SPSC secretary