Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, January 11, 2009
HSC Skyroom, 10 A.M.

Present: Cesarek, Gillis (Smith), Gautcher, Benson, Pickett, Stang, Trottier (Peska), Lux, Lamb (Nelson), Dickey (Young), Olson, Builta, Baker, Latham, Turner, Mueller, Snell (Apperson), Anderson, Haliczer, Gilbert, Ostenburg (Chemers), Clark (Bernoudy), Pickett

Absent: House, Peska, Young, Bernoudy, Bottiglieri,

Guests: Tim Griffin, Steve Cunningham, Celeste Latham

Call to order at 10:06 am.

Agenda was amended to include under announcements:
Addition of c. Feb. 14 Remembrance
Addition of d. Request for Household Goods
*Approval of the Agenda: Latham moved, Second by Builta, passed unanimously

Approval of the minutes from Dec. 11, 2008
*Gilbert moved, Second by Benson, passed unanimously

Announcements
a. President Cesarek informed council that a new banner was in place on the SPS Council website.
b. Haliczer spoke to council on the Campus Security Enhancement Act of 2008. She shared with council that the university was required to have a violence prevention committee and a threat assessment committee. The purpose is to review concerns and prevent violence when possible. Faculty and staff also have committees that parallel the ones mentioned. Mike Stang indicated that legal procedures were needed especially in the areas of access and how information may be used. Grant Olson addressed his concerns on how people are identified, access to information, files, file information, and whether files become permanent. Haliczer responded addressing and acknowledging his concerns. Stang spoke about existing student files, who might maintain the files, how information may be shared and retained. He also spoke on how the current structure works. Neil Dickey asked how the committee members were decided. Haliczer responded that the president and his cabinet, provost, Legal Counsel, and Student Affairs were involved. Dickey then asked on how people are identified to serve. Haliczer indicated that a hierarchical protocol was to be followed. Olson responded that committees should include people of different thoughts. His concerns focused on threat versus expression. Cesarek ask Haliczer to report back on the status by May. Haliczer emphasized the need to educate the community on behaviors. Jon Ostenburg asked about the level of knowledge. He gave the for example of an employee under the direction to take medication. Haliczer replied that such matters of employee wellness were
confidential. Chairs of the committees are Haliczer for faculty and Kelly Wesener for students.

C. 2/14 Remembrance  President Cesarek asked council to see the Northern Star for the outline of events and encouraged SPS support.

d. A request went out by Haliczer for household items for a colleague in the Student Affairs Office.

Committees of the Council

Awards-
President Cesarek was asked to leave the room while nominees were presented by the Awards Committee. Co-Chair, Missy Gillis presented a list of Nominees for the SPS Presidential Award for Excellence 2009. Gillis moved to approve the SPSC Awards Committee’s recommendation to President Peters of: Nancy Apperson, Barbara Fouts, Lina Ong, and Connie Uhlken for the presidential award. Second by Tim Trottier with motion passing.

Gillis asked that council e-mail her potential nominees for SPS Council Certificates of Recognition. Lux stated that nominees are confidential until they are made public. Haliczer reviewed the process.

Haliczer asked for nomination for the SPS Council Service Award encouraging SPS alternates and representatives to make nominations by the February Council meeting at which time a vote will take place. She reminded council that the SPS Awards Ceremony will take place on Tuesday, April 21 from 2-4 pm in the HSC ballroom.

Communications -
No report

Constitutions and Elections -
No report

Events -
SPS Spring Luncheon will take place from 11:30 to 1 pm at the Chandelier Room. Ostenburg asked about the need to pre-register. Cesarek responded that it was not needed.

Finance -
Cesarek reminded committees to submit fund requests to Treasurer Chemers. A statewide SPS workshop is still being planned.

Legislative -
No report

Technology Resources -
No report
Work Place Issues-
Benson informed council that due to the absence of Lyndon Perkins that Jen Clark was appointed co-chair of the committee with Benson. Benson spoke to council about the next issue on the committee’s list. The committee will be considering how to define a reasonable work load. Included will be the supervisor point of view and a review of the campus culture. The concept of a newsletter was discussed as a possible e-letter with distribution through the communications committee.

Vice President-
No Report

Old Business

a. Grievance Procedures- Haliczer reported that an Ad Hoc committee of Stang, Perkins, Griffin, and Haliczer met and will have a draft at the next council meeting. The draft will introduce termination for cause language into the general grievance procedures. If approved by council, President Cesarek will present the document to University Council for consideration.

b. Sabbaticals- The Ad Hoc committee consists of Haliczer, Stand, King, and Lux. Lux reported that a survey would be distributed on the wording and rational of a revised sabbatical policy for feedback. He indicated that part-time or sabbatical leave was an obstacle for SPS. Discussion continued on when the survey would be ready for distribution. Lamb inquired on behalf of temporary SPS. Haliczer responded that they are not eligible. Ostenburg asked about a list of temporary SPS to which Haliczer responded that Celeste Latham could provide the list.

c. Parking Committee- Phil Young was selected to fill the vacancy of Hansfield on the committee.

New Business

a. Letter of support- Cesarek asked the SPS Council to approve a letter of support for NIU HR to assume the responsibility of SPS hiring letters. Stang asked if the vote was needed today as he would like to look at all details before voting. Motion by Gilbert, second by Latham to table the issue to the February meeting.

b. Work Place Related Issues- Dr. Steve Cunningham, Associate Vice President for Administration and Human Resources, was accompanied by Celeste Latham, Director of HRS Operations, to address council. Dr. Cunningham started by saying that in spite of the weather that all community colleges and universities were open for operation.

Offering Letters- Cunningham stated that new procedures are being reviewed to update hiring procedures through on-line programs. Offering letters are a procedural process that once all paperwork is completed, HR would send the offer letter, monitor documents and time line. The department could adapt software for “applicant tracking” and make hiring procedures on line, including faculty.
Evaluations for SPS- Cunningham indicated that frequent and on-going correspondence increased notifications to supervisors and the supervisors’ supervisors. The result was a 78% return rate and an 80% return rate was considered ideal. Cunningham indicated that he would communicate to the deans and president’s cabinet on this issue. HR assumed that 20% of the supervisors were not accustomed to an evaluation process. HR would follow up on the 22% that did not get an evaluation to see if there were concerns. Cesarek asked about sample evaluations and Haliczer replied that a variety of models are in the works.

Job Descriptions- HR is implementing an overall process to get them updated, especially regarding job scope and relationship to evaluations. HR is required to do this for civil service positions and positions exempt from civil service (SPS) for auditing. C. Latham has reviewed 1299 job descriptions to get these updated. Only 9% do not have a description on file. Currently, those updated within the last three years is about 40%, and job descriptions older than five years are increasingly out of date. Supervisors will begin to receive a monthly update, similar to the process used for civil service employees.

Dr. Cunningham informed the council that a new “HR Website” would be out in the 2nd quarter. It will look like the standard NIU template but with interactive aspects including an index and links.

Salary Survey- Cunningham shared with council that HR attempted to fill a new “compensation analyst” to prepare and maintain a salary survey database, among other responsibilities. NIU also started a statewide initiative. However, the search failed, then budget issues have essentially placed a freeze on filling the position. Excellent databases exist for tracking faculty positions by rank and discipline, but this is not the case for SPS. One organization that HRS utilizes for information is the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA) and they produce an administrative and mid-level survey. Celeste Latham completed a review mapping positions to CUPA codes. Given that the position cannot be filled at this time, the process will continue, but at a much slower rate, as current departmental personnel work on surveys as time permits. Cesarek asked if SPS can be proactive with professional organizations and look for organizations related to their positions. Cunningham indicated that it would fine to forward such information, especially as a later step to use the professional association data.

Mandatory Supervisor Training- Cunningham indicated that this type of training has been reviewed with the HRS directors on the curriculum for the training that exists as part of what Deb Haliczer does for HR. Supervisor training is:

1. Concise overview of NIU as an organization, structure, board, policy and procedures, compliance, AADR, ethics, and payroll.
2. Skills Training: how to be an effective supervisor, NIU standards, especially of an institution.
3. Client/Customer Service: enrollment drives this, accountability of ourselves and employees, and how we handle customers

Deb Haliczer suggested that supervisors go through one mandatory session, required at all levels, with an emphasis on how to eliminate supervisory mistakes, work on soft skills, customer service to core competencies, evaluations, job descriptions, policy, tracking of training, and acknowledgements. Cesarek asked who is involved and format of participations. Cunningham replied that this was to be determined. Once the program is outlined, the deans and cabinet need to opportunity to provide input and then buy-in for such a program. He recommended that HR start a pilot program with that group and review the feedback. Cunningham stated that President Peters is supportive of this initiative.

Temporary SPS- Cesarek informed council that a request was sent to Dr. Cunningham and Celeste Latham asking for data and trends on the hiring of temps. Cunningham stated that exact data was to be discussed with President Peters. Board regulations have regular and temporary in the same section. Temporary SPS serve a one year, non-continuing contract, no notice requirement for non-continuation. Some temps have served in positions for 10, 15, and 20 years, so this is an issue. Cunningham stated that approximately one-third of all SPS are in the temporary category. Of the one-third, 80% are non-appropriated fund, sales and service, or grants. Grant-funded temporary SPS positions are common. HRS reviewed data from 2002 to 2008 on temporary SPS positions. Cunningham stated hiring temporary SPS is not an avoidance of payouts (an inconvenience, but funded obligation). He stated NIU has experienced diminished funding sources. Temps versus regulars are a matter of the funding source and concern about the potential for a soft money funding loss. Rarely is there a performance issue as the reason for non-renewal. Cunningham stated that vacation is accrued the same as regular SPS, but if not used, reverts back to zero. He stated that an acknowledgment of this is of concern needs to be added to SPS orientation. The major concern is for SURS service credit. Sick is not payable but relates to the SURS benefit. Gilbert asked if benefits were the concern as being approved with vacation, similar to sick leave with the one-year limit. Cunningham replied that it was worth looking into it. Cesarek indicated that in her opinion most vacation days were not taken at the beginning, but taken towards the end of the eligibility year and only if time permits. The maximum vacation days accrued by regular SPS employees are 56 and there are those who also lose vacation days. Ostenburg asked if vacation is accrued at two days per month and, if so, then it takes anyone a few months to accrue a sizable amount. He then asked if an employee can go into deficit. C. Latham responded that an employee can go into a deficit, but the employee cannot exceed the contracted amount. If an employee does this then the result is a deduction in pay, this benefit applies to SPS and faculty who accrue vacation benefits only, not civil service. Cunningham again indicated that this aspect could be better communicated to employees. Lamb asked to review the procedural process of negative accrual. Haliczer added that supervisors need to know this very information. Cunningham indicated that he would follow up
with Cesarek on the policy with council to work on campus awareness. Lux asked about the number of SPS with different funding sources. Cunningham indicated that he did not have that data with him. Lamb indicated that her position was 60/40, 60 college and 40 grant funded. Cesarek asked that in a case like Lamb’s were she is 60% college funded, could the position become regular. Cunningham replied that it was worth evaluating. Haliczer noted that an increment to those funded by grants is a yes, but based on fund availability. Some grants included an increment allowance. Cunningham said that he has heard this from SPS and temporary faculty. He noted that HR needed to look at the increment guidelines and can look at the list of temporary positions providing information to Deans on the funding source or split. Mueller stated that graduate assistants have a similar system. Benson said that 15 years of her employment at NIU has been through a grant-funded position. Benefits, work load has routinely prohibited her from using available vacation time and asked if it could be refunded. Cunningham stated that refunds are not a likely prospect to consider; banking the benefit could be considered to a certain point. Pickett clarified that 56 is the maximum vacation days, sick days for regular is unlimited, but not payable, if unused after a certain period and is converted to SURS service credit.

*Work Load.* Cunningham started the discussion on work load expectations. He stated that work load is a tough SPS topic by definition of administration, fair labor standards act, and by definition the work must be done. Exempt employees must also not regularly account for their time as do hourly employees. Work loads have increased as growth and complexity is handled by SPS. He noted that NIU administration is aware of this, but there is no near solution. When resources for compensation exist and internal promotion is possible, work load should be considered as part of the merit/compensation system. The normal work day is 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., plus attending work-related events as may be necessary in addition to the normal work schedule, FLSA does not allow a comp time policy. Supervisors are allowed an internal informal mechanism for an allowance. Cesarek asked about the work place committee perspective. Haliczer replied that this issue was in the SPS survey, with comments, as they accounted for their work day/work week. There has been an increase in work load and dealings with inflexible supervisors. Haliczer noted that this is another topic to be included in supervisor training. Cunningham also said that reporting of hours worked, to be in compliance with the ethics act (a time sheet reporting format), was implemented in HR last year as a pilot program in which HR employees track their work in 15 minute intervals. The example was given where each employee would track their own workday (not sick time or vacation time), maintain the record for three years, and report on a new benefit usage calendar that would have a special section where the minimum number of hours reported would total the 7.5 hour average work days completed for the month. Cunningham noted that the work load data will be interesting and a good report for interested parties concerning the university workload. AP/SPS in-fact work beyond 7.5 hours on a regular basis. Lamb asked Cunningham is this report included all work-related activities. Clark asked if it was a detailed report. Cunningham
responded that it was just a total and would not reflect details of what, when and where. Lux asked about the semester report of FSRs. Cunningham stated that the two reports are not connected. They are separate compliance reports.

*Preserving Jobs*- Cunningham stated that the budget context, the situation, was not predictable and the effect and outcomes are only now becoming known. The state budget is at the worst ever, billions in debt, and sources of income to offset the debt are needed. We do not want significant job loss at the state levels, state jobs help stabilize the economy. Constitutional provision is good for the security of state positions. President Peters and Eddie Williams, Executive Vice President of Business and Finance, know there will be cuts in the budget of some significance. FY 2010, another cut is expected, but NIU is unique and does not lay off its employees or cut positions in response to the current economic situation and would do so only as a last resort. Academic programs, security, student support are considerations along with job security. We have not dealt with this level of broad-based economic crisis before Cunningham reiterated.

**Adjournment**- The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 A.M.

Respectfully submitted-Todd Latham