Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, March 12, 2009
Sky Room, 10:00 A.M.

Present
Nancy Apperson, Frankie Benson, Cliff Bottiglieri, Bobbie Cesarek, Kay Chapman, Jes Cisneros, Jen Clark, Norden Gilbert, Missy Gillis, Deborah Haliczer, Dan House, Angela Johansson, Todd Latham, Al Mueller, Cynthia Nelson, Jonathon Ostenburg, Lyndon Perkins, Tracy Rogers, Judy Santacaterina, Donna Smith, Michael Stang, Tim Trottier, Phil Young, Rita Yusko

Guests
Karen Baker, Tim Griffin, Mitch Kielb

Absent
Sam Baker

I. Call to Order
SPS Council President Bobbie Cesarek called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

A. A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda with the following changes:

Announcements:
Add D) Deacon Davis Award

New Business:
Add C) Illinois Public Employees Retirement Systems (ILPERS)

Motion passed unanimously.

B. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2009 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Guests

A. Karen Baker, Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources
Baker explained that she is visiting different councils on campus to get feedback in addition to the feedback her area receives from their advisory committee. They have been hearing from various groups that the affirmative action process is untrustworthy and she would like to take steps to educate the campus community about the process. She explained that individuals who feel they have been treated unfairly can file a complaint with her office. Then they begin fact finding to determine if there was a violation. She clarified that while the process is confidential, there are other individuals who need to be involved, including witnesses and the respondent, however these parties are instructed to keep the situation confidential. Also, the findings are shared with the respondent’s supervisor, but nothing is put in the official HRS file of the respondent. Ostenburg asked what is shared with the supervisor and Baker responded that the supervisor is only informed if it is determined that the claim
is warranted and corrective actions need to be taken. Rogers asked if witnesses can refuse to cooperate and Baker responded that if they do refuse cooperation, they could be subject to disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis. Perkins asked if all the cases are responded to and Baker confirmed that they are. Baker next explained that complaints of retaliation are also investigated by her office. Currently, employees have up to a year to file a complaint, but that will be changing soon to 90 days. Also, employees have the right to take their complaint externally to the EEOC. Baker also noted that there are other resources in addition to or instead of filing a complaint, such as Counseling and Student Development Center, Employee Assistance Program, Office of the Ombudsman, Women’s Resource Center, etc. These offices hold all visits confidential, but do not result in any investigation, nor do they share information with the Affirmative Action office.

B. Haliczer introduced another guest, Mitch Kielb, director of the HSC.

III. Announcements

A. April 21, 2009, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m, SPS Presidential Awards for Excellence (HSC Ballroom)
   Cesarek reminded Council members of this event and a sample invitation was routed.

B. February 14 – Thank you
   Cesarek noted that the events on February 14 were very well done. She noted that the script, prepared by Harold Kafer, associate vice provost and former dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, is online. Also online are comments regarding the event at: [http://www.niu.edu/forward/events.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/forward/events.shtml).

C. College of Visual and Performing Arts Dean’s Search
   Cesarek reported that the candidates are Rich Holly, Russ Schultz, and Kathleen Wilson and pointed out the times for the open forums. Also, Tracy Rogers will be the SPS representative for the search.

D. Deacon Davis Award
   Cesarek passed around the flyer for the Deacon Davis Award. It was clarified that the award can go to anyone on campus; faculty, staff, or students.

E. Baccalaureate Review Task Force
   Cesarek reported that the Baccalaureate Review Task Force is hoping to meet with members of the Council on March 19. Smith reminded Council members that the online survey and open forums are other ways Council members can provide feedback.

IV. Committees of the Council

A. Awards
   Haliczer reported that there is a reminder about nominations for the SPS certificates on the Council web page. March 20 is the deadline. Haliczer thanked Xidis for updating the web page. About 20 – 25 employees will receive the certificate from a variety of areas on campus. The 10 nonrecipients of the Presidential Award automatically receive this award. She added that the final list will be e-mailed to Council members for their approval. Cesarek asked how many nominations had been received to date and Haliczer responded that there are nine nominations and
all but one of them is by a Council member. She asked Council members to think about colleagues who they can nominate.

B. Communications
Smith reported for Pickett and Xidis. She noted that the committee has completed the policies and procedures manual. Cesarek reminded Council members that this manual can be used as a template for the other committees. She would like to have these in place for all the committees before the start of the next fiscal year, since committee membership turns over at that time.

C. Constitution and Elections
Gilbert reported that there are still openings for representation in some of the divisions for the upcoming election. There are 25 openings; 12 representatives and 13 alternates. Of the 99 individuals nominated, at this time only six nominees have said yes, 16 no. He will follow-up with the rest. Gilbert also stated that he has received a lot of questions about the Council, so it’s apparent that it remains a challenge for the Council to educate constituents. Nelson suggested that the nominators be contacted to urge nominees to run for Council and Gilbert stated that he may pursue that. There was discussion about whether or not the time commitment is a deterrent to running and Gilbert noted that being a member of the Council isn’t too time consuming. However, the main reason nominees give for declining the nomination is lack of spare time to devote to the Council.

D. Events
Chapman reported that the recent event was successful with 56 in attendance who heard an outstanding speaker. The next event is April 22 and the speaker will be Judy Burgess, NIU’s operating staff representative to the SURS Member Advisory Committee.

E. Finance
It was reported that there is $650 of unobligated funds left in the account. Cesarek reported that she still would like to host a get-together of at least the presidents of other similar councils throughout the state. She also asked committees to let Chemers know if they might have need for money.

F. Legislative
No report.

G. Technology Resources
Ostenburg reported that he is working with Celeste Latham in HRS to better refine the data in preparation for the upcoming election.

H. Workplace Issues
Clark reported on the recent meeting. They discussed the discrepancy between employment classifications and tuition waivers. For hourly operating staff, the supervisor signs the tuition waiver if the class is taken during normal working hours (8:00 – 4:30). For faculty and SPS, the supervisor informally signs-off on the tuition waiver no matter when the class is taken. She noted that there have been some reports where a supervisor has not signed a tuition waiver for SPS employees. The committee discussed whether or not a supervisor should have to sign-off on an SPS tuition waiver. Clark added that whether or not the class is being taken during working hours, SPS are required to have their supervisors sign their tuition waivers. For operating staff, they only need to have their supervisor sign their waiver if they are taking the class during normal working hours. Haliczer noted that why SPS have to have their tuition waiver signed no matter when their classes are is that sometimes
job duties require them to work outside of the normal hours of 8:00 – 4:30. Cesarek asked if there is an appeals process for employees who are unable to get their waivers approved by their supervisors. Haliczer stated that this could be done through the NIU Grievance Procedure, based on working conditions. Perkins added that the committee also discussed if this particular issue was one they wanted to continue to pursue. It was suggested that the committee could prepare a proposal to improve the policy for SPS employees. But Benson noted that HRS has already been approached about the discrepancy with no action taken. There was discussion on whether or not an employee is being denied a benefit if the supervisor doesn’t give approval and that SPS can only use the tuition waiver here. Operating staff may use theirs at other institutions, but this is only for undergraduate work. Stang noted that a supervisor may deny the waiver based on performance issues or the need for an employee to work during the time the class is offered. He has staff in his area who do work outside of the regular hours. Latham suggested that the Workplace Issues Committee meet with HRS to get more information on why there are differences between policies for tuition waivers and to look at policies for other universities.

The committee has also been working on issues regarding temporary SPS. They are working on a grid to illustrate the differences between regular and temporary SPS.

I. Vice President
Latham pointed out that parking fees for 2009-10 will remain the same as last year. To cut costs at the library, hours may be reduced as well as purchasing resources. He also reported that 491 undergraduate women were surveyed and equestrian was identified as a sport of interest. The survey was done due to a Title IX finding.

V. Old Business

A. HRS vs. Department Working Titles
Haliczer reported that there are discrepancies between the HR titles, which are listed in the online directory, and some employees’ working titles. She presented the Council with a copy of the policy for changing one’s title and asked Council members to review the policy and come back to the next meeting with any questions.

B. Sabbaticals
Lux thanked the Council members who provided feedback to the survey about sabbaticals. It will get sent out to SPS in the near future. The incentive for participation was discussed. Mueller noted that the Council has to be careful about incentives because some may be taxable. Small items, including NIU items, should be acceptable. It was determined that $100 worth of NIU sweatshirts/t-shirts would be purchased for incentives.

C. Grievance Procedures
Haliczer reported that she and Griffin will meet to finalize a version for the Council to review.

D. Update on Workplace Issues from meeting with Steve Cunningham
Cesarek reported on her recent meeting with Steve Cunningham. Regarding evaluations, Cesarek reported that there is a 78% return. They discussed providing supervisors with examples of evaluations and noting in the cover letter that these opportunities exist. She also noted that follow-up with supervisors who have not completed evaluations will be more extensive. Regarding job descriptions, HR is
working on reviewing all SPS job descriptions. She encouraged all SPS employees to review their job descriptions to make sure that they are up-to-date. Cesarek noted that the search for the position in HRS that would handle a salary survey is on hold. She added that anyone who might have appropriate information through a professional organization would be welcome to share that information with HRS, to Cunningham’s attention. Regarding mandatory supervisory training, Haliczer and Karen Baker are working on the training, with about 25-35% of the training focusing on soft skills. Deans and vice presidents have expressed interest. Human Resource Services hopes to do a pilot training program this summer. Cunningham feels that the mandatory training will be help establish a defined set of values on how people are to be treated. Regarding temporary SPS, more comparisons of benefits need to be done. Cesarek also announced that SPS employees are the next test group for compliance with the ethics act with regards to documenting time spent. Haliczer will bring sample documents to the next Council meeting.

VI. New Business

A. Request for committee members: UCPC Special Hearing Board (need 5 names). Cesarek will follow-up with the University Council to find out why this is needed.

B. Illinois Public Employees Retirement Systems (ILPERS). There is a proposal from the Illinois State Treasure Alexi Giannoulias to condense all the Illinois retirement systems into one system. The university is expecting each council to discuss and to respond. Latham talked about issues for consideration, including the fact that pension funds may be raided. He added that there is more information at the treasurer’s website: http://www.treasurer.il.gov/. Latham distributed a copy of an informational handout about the proposed ILPERS prepared by HRS and he noted that the proposal is gaining momentum due to the state’s financial situation.

VII. University Committee Reports

The following reports were distributed prior to the meeting: University Council and Board of Trustees committee reports (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel; Finance, Facilities and Operations; and Legislative, Audit and External Affairs).

VIII. Other Business

A. The Wellness Fair was announced, March 25, 10:00 – 3:00, Duke Ellington Ballroom.

B. Oxford professor, Richard Carwardine, will speak Monday, April 6, in the Lincoln Room of the Holmes Student Center, at 7:30 p.m.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, SPSC secretary