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

Present

Guests
Tim Griffin, Jay Monteiro

Absent
Monique Bernoudy, Dan House

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

A. Stang made a motion, seconded by , seconded by Czerniak, to approve the agenda with the following additions:
   1. Announcements: 1) True North Campaign, 2) H1N1 preparations, 3) Snell and Supplier Diversity Fair

B. Fransen made a motion, seconded by Gillis, to approve the SPSC minutes of the August 13, 2009, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Announcements

A. State of the University. Cesarek announced that the president will give the State of the University address on September 10, 3:00 p.m. He will announce that the True North capital campaign goal of $150 million has been met, but now faculty and staff are being asked for support.

B. Guest Speaker, David Wade, Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor. Introductions were made. Wade stated that it was good to hear all the different job titles; that it gives him a better sense of who SPS are. He gave his background; 20 years at NIU as an associate professor in the Department of Management. He has a background in psychology and law and teaches business law and organizational behavior. His research interests are civil rights discrimination law, some labor law, and some counseling. Wade spoke about his role as the Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor. He is enjoying his time in the position so far. It is good to be problem solving and helping people. He advises and assists faculty and SPS who have difficulties understand and coping with the personnel process. He is a sympathetic ear who remains neutral. The position is a safe haven where issues can be honestly discussed without fear that what’s being discussed will be used against the employee. He doesn’t see himself as an advocate per se, but when he sees an
injustice, it’s hard for him to remain neutral. He added that most procedures encourage informal resolutions and he strongly believes in that as well. Griffin noted the distinction between his position and Wade’s position. Griffin, as ombudsman, is a generalist, seeing anyone who is related to NIU in any capacity. Wade is a specialist and Griffin often refers appropriate individuals to Wade. Griffin also clarified that employees need not come to him first. Also, the ombudsman by definition and professional ethics, is required to remain neutral. Wade has the luxury, as noted above, to be an advocate if need be.

C. True North.

D. H1N1. Cesarek noted that this was a big topic at the last University Council meeting. Linda Herrmann, assistant vice president for student health and wellness, gave a presentation with Brian Hemphill, vice president for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. The message is that the university is prepared for the flu and any outbreak, including vaccinations, isolations, and preventative measures.

E. Supplier Diversity Fair. Snell announced that the Supplier Diversity Fair will be October 7, 9:00 – 12:00 in the ballroom. It is co-sponsored by Human Resources and Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources. She explained that there is a mandate from the state of Illinois for state institutions to help grow the economic development of small and diverse businesses. She added that the organizers took into consideration the Council’s suggestion to include the student groups and had about 30 organizations attend last year. Gillis noted that she attended last year and met a vendor that her area is now using. Mueller added that participants need to be certified by the state.

III. Committees of the Council

A. Awards
Gillis reported that the committee will soon be soliciting nominations for the SPS Presidential Award for Excellence. She also reported on Faculty Development Grants. At this time, she wasn’t sure if there would be any available.

B. Communications
Smith reported that the committee met and talked about what they typically do throughout the year. One duty is to monitor the SPSC e-mail in box. Last year each committee member was assigned two months and since that worked well, Xidis will be sending out a schedule again this year for committee members.

C. Constitution and Elections
No report.

D. Events
Cesarek announced that the “After Hours” will be October 1 in the Thurgood Marshall gallery. The dates for the “Between Hours” luncheons will be October 21 and November 13. Jeff Reynolds, Economics professor, will be the speaker for the first lunch, and a representative from the State University Retirement System (SURS) will be the speaker for the second lunch. She’d like to get a postcard out to SPS that will announce all three dates.

E. Finance
No report.

F. Legislative
Peska announced that the first meeting will be September 24.
G. Technology Resources
Ostenburg reported that the committee discussed what needs to be done over the
course of the year. In addition to what needs to be done for elections and
reapportionment, they are looking at trying to automate some of the processes. He
asked the other committee chairs to let him know if they want to do things differently.
He reported that there are 893 SPS. Cesarek asked if there was any way to
determine how many of those have been hired in the last three years to send them a
personal invitation to the SPS After Hours. Ostenburg thought that there was a way
to do that.

H. Workplace Issues
Clark reported that the committee discussed which issue to bring forward to the
Council for discussion. See New Business below.

I. Vice President
Latham reported that most of the university committees have met at least once. He
added that the Campus Parking Committee is still in need of direction and that Eddie
Williams will attend the next meeting. Cesarek reported that she also plans to attend
that meeting.

IV. Old Business
A. Sabbaticals.
No report.

B. Grievance Procedures
Due to Haliczer’s excused absence, this was tabled.

V. New Business
A. Discussion from Workplace Issues.
After input from the committee, Clark noted that at issue is the confusion and
sometimes negative perceptions of the classification, “Supportive Professional Staff.”
Lamb reported that the committee surveyed other Mid American Conference (MAC)
schools and found titles such as professional staff, professional administrative, and
administrative. Czerniak asked what is the history of Supportive Professional Staff.
Nelson recalled that there was a desire to move away from the “faculty no-rank”
name and options for a new name were put to a vote. Cesarek suggested that
additional research into the history of the name be done. At other universities in
Illinois, the title is administrative professionals. However, it was noted that at NIU,
the office support staff (formerly secretaries) call themselves administrative
professionals when they meeting as an advisory committee. Chemers noted that
calling SPS administrative professionals may have other connotations that are
associated with administrators. Calling Supportive Professional Staff just
professional staff is problematic since many civil service employees could be
considered professional staff. It was suggested that the Workplace Issues
committee do further research including finding the original list of names that were
presented to choose from and possibly surveying current SPS. Polyak asked about
the need for the change, she sees no issue with the title Supportive Professional
Staff. Other Council members agreed, stating that a lot of work has been done to
increase the visibility of Supportive Professional Staff under that name. Cesarek
added that if the term “supportive” has negative connotations, maybe the Council needs to do some more educating of the university community as to what SPS really do and who all they support. Cesarek read from the SPSC brochure which covers the issues being discussed. It was also noted that the brochures only go to SPS during orientation and it was suggested that they also could be sent to faculty and operating staff to improve visibility and perceptions of Supportive Professional Staff.

B. Enrollment Management Task Force. Cesarek reported that she has been asked to appoint an SPSC member to this task force by Brian Hemphill. The charge is to develop an overall comprehensive Strategic Plan for Enrollment Management. Hemphill wants to create a 10-year strategic plan focusing on the development of five fundamental areas: enrollment objectives and strategies with performance outcomes, the marketing and branding of NIU, measurable initiatives targeted to improve student retention, a plan that aligns enrollment goals with university resources, and a detailed strategy that focuses all areas of enrollment management on specific, quantifiable indicators of success. The plan is to meet monthly for at least a year with the potential for subcommittees. Nelson volunteered and was appointed.

VI. University Committee Reports

A. The following reports from Cesarek were distributed prior to the meeting: committee reports from the BOT. Cesarek pointed out issues of note from the reports. First was the issue of MAP grants not being funded for the spring semester. This affects about 5,000 students. Communication about the issue to legislators was encouraged, especially from students and parents. Ongoing campus projects were reported on. The update to the MLK Commons is complete and the new Academic Advising Center is open at the former Wesley Foundation building to the north of the parking deck. Funds for the renovation of Cole Hall and Stevens Building has been legislated but has yet to be released. Danielle Schultz was announced the new director of internal audit. Gas prices were locked in at $2.041 per gallon. Kishwaukee Hall has been demolished and the radio antenna was moved. Rich Holly was announced as the new dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. Construction is almost complete for the memorial garden outside of Cole Hall. The proton therapy project is ongoing. New leaders of the Board of Trustees are Marc Strauss, chair, and John Butler, vice chair.

Cesarek reported on the University Council meeting. Flu shots were discussed. For Faculty Senate, Michael Morris was elected vice-president and Nancy Castle was elected secretary.

Cesarek reported on the Operating Staff Council meeting. There was an interesting discussion on minimum and maximum temperatures in offices. The discussion was that there are no provisions for employees who work in conditions that are either too hot or too cold. It was determined that, with a supervisor's permission, someone who was unable to work in either of those situations could take a sick day (but not a vacation day). They also have a new logo, which is very nice. Check it out on their home page.

The Foundations of Excellence continues. There will be a drive-in conference on September 25, 2009, with John Gardner and Betsy Barefoot as the keynote speakers.

VII. Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, SPSC secretary