Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, October 14, 2010
Sky Room, 10:00 A.M.

Present
Nancy Apperson, Bradley Badgley, Joan Briscoe, Abby Chemers, Jen Clark, Neil Dickey, Cindy Ditzler, Bev Espe, Samantha Fisher, Deborah Fransen, Dena Funkhouser, Dana Gautcher, Deborah Haliczer, Anne Hardy, Gail Hayenga, Jean Jagodzinski, Julia Lamb, Todd Latham, Laura Lundelius, Jenifer Montag, Salvatore Morreale, Jonathon Ostenburg, Lyndon Perkins, Scott Peska, Dawn Roznowski, Donna Smith, Michael Stang, Connie Uhlken, Rachel Xidis, Phil Young, Rita Yusko

Guests
Tim Griffin, Jay Monteiro

Absent
Pat Anderson

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Supportive Professional Staff Council President Todd Latham.

Chemers made a motion, seconded by Roznowski, to approve the agenda with the following changes. Under Announcements, add b) Host families, and c) Retirement seminar. Motion passed unanimously.

Regarding the minutes, Haliczer noted that under Awards, Certificates of Appreciate should be Certificates of Recognition. Peska made a motion, seconded by Lamb, to approve the SPSC minutes of the September 9, 2010, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed

II. Guest Speaker. Kathy Buettner, Vice President of University Relations. Buettner began by apologizing for missing the last Council meeting. The rest of her presentation focused on the new division of University Relations, which was formed in August 2009 at the request of President Peters and consists of Public Affairs, Media Services, Publications, Government Relations, Board of Trustee Operations, and Freedom of Information Act Requests. Once established, Peters charged the division with developing a brand identity and corresponding marketing strategy for NIU to, per Buettner's PowerPoint, "allow us to compete and flourish despite the increasing cacophony of higher education options for potential students--community colleges, quality private colleges and universities in the region, as well as public universities including UIUC, UIC, and ISUE." What she discovered is that NIU has extraordinary talent in this new division--communications, videographers, writers, editors, web content specialists, etc. These are also individuals who care deeply about NIU, and she is able to use the in-house talent available to meet Peters's charge. Also, meeting the needs of students through social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, etc., became a priority; NIU needs to meet students where they are. The new
structure in University Relations takes into consideration these talents and needs and teams are built based on the work load. In addition to meeting students via social networking sites, this division is creating applications for the variety of mobile platforms available (iphone, ipads, droids, etc.). For example, by January, 2011, students will be able to access Blackboard through smart phones and different organizations on campus, such as athletics, will also be able to develop applications. She foresees that in the future students will be able to register for classes via their smart phones.

Buettner discussed another responsibility of the division, fulfilling Freedom of Information Act Requests. The majority of these are from vendors who want to be competitive with their bids. Since filling the requests can be a lengthy legal process, she has told the Northern Star and other local media to simple ask for the information and her area should be able to supply that for them without going through fulfilling Freedom of Information Act Requests.

Working on branding the institution has involved student, faculty, staff, and community feedback. They have done at least 10 student focus groups as well as an extensive survey administered by the Public Opinion Lab. Her division is also working on advertising and they are already advertising heavily for next year’s class. They received feedback from this year’s freshman class regarding what media they are listening to (local and/or satellite radio, etc.). Taglines are being developed and in the coming weeks the NIU community will be asked to respond to those. She added that what matters is which values people feel are important to emphasize over the next couple of years. Everyone in the university community will have a consistent message or "elevator speech," to become word-of-mouth ambassadors. Major publications (different from view books) are being prepared to increase national awareness of NIU with higher education administrators.

Buettner was asked if she felt the needs of the employees who deal with equipment were really a part of this division. She responded that she had discussions with the provost to that effect and it was determined that they fit and she is learning what all their talents are and how best to utilize those employees. The feedback she has received is that people are content with the services of this division.

III. Announcements

A. Ethics Training, October 20 through November 18. Haliczer explained how employees access the training and added that she and Karen Smith are the contacts if there are questions.

B. Host Families. Lamb distributed a flyer about the need for host families for the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program. She noted that this is the second year that the Center for Southeast Asian Studies has hosted this event, including 28 high school aged students and seven educators from Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam for a three-week training program. Chemers reported that she hosted several students last year and it was a very rewarding experience; these are the cream-of-the-crop students.

C. Retirement Seminar, November 9, HSC Regency Room. Haliczer reminded the Council that anyone may participate; you do not have to be close to retirement to attend.

D. Congratulations to Xidis, who recently defended her dissertation.
IV. Committees of the Council

A. Awards
Gautcher reported that solicitations for nominations for the SPS Presidential Award will go out in the coming week with a December 1 due date. The awards ceremony is scheduled for April 19, 2011, 2:00 – 4:30.

B. Communications
Xidis reported that committee members who needed it received training in WebCRMA. She is also working on collected SPSC members photos to be posted to the website. She asked anyone who noted that they would send her a photo to do so if they haven’t yet sent one.

C. Constitution and Elections
No report.

D. Events
Hardy reported that the luncheon with the speaker Matthew Streb was very successful. There were about 60 in attendance. October 23 is the SPS tailgate along with faculty/staff appreciation day at the football game. Attendees need to RSVP and prepay for lunch and make separate arrangements for obtaining tickets to the football game.

E. Finance
Chemers assisted the events committee with setting up a prepay system for the tailgating.

F. Legislative
No report.

G. Technology Resources
No report.

H. Workplace Issues
Clark reported that they will be meeting with the staff in Grants Fiscal Administration regarding temporary SPS. They are hoping that by the November meeting they will have a proposal to submit to the Council.

I. Vice President
Peska noted that his report was sent via e-mail.

V. Old Business

A. SPS Survey.
Haliczer reported that Cynthia Nelson is working on the quantitative analysis and she and Roznowski are working on the verbatim portions of the survey.

B. Grievance Procedure Update. Latham reported that he attended the Rules and Governance Committee and answered questions about the Council’s proposed revisions to the Grievance Procedure. He added that Legal Counsel supported the work of the Council.
VI. New Business

A. Cost-of-living Increase Proposal. Latham introduced the three-tiered proposal for cost-of-living increase and also provided additional scenarios if an additional tier could be added. Discussion followed regarding whether or not the Council should reject the three-tier proposal and submit the four-tier alternative, which would provide a greater percent of an increase to those employees earning the least. There were also questions about where the money is coming from and whether there have to be layoffs to finance the increases. Latham responded that the money is coming primarily from budget cuts and through nonfilling of vacant positions. Apperson made a motion, seconded by Clark, that the SPSC strongly support the progressive salary distribution and to be more equitable a four-tier system be considered giving more to the lower tier. A vote was taken by hand and the motion passed with several opposed and one abstention.

B. Mandatory Vacation Usage. Latham reported that the administration is looking at closing the university December 20, 21, and 22nd, with employees having to use their vacation benefit or take those days without pay. For those who do not have enough time, it was clarified that HRS will work with them. Uhlken asked about employees who do not earn vacation time, and Haliczer stated that it is her understanding that they would not need to do anything. A hand vote was taken with 18 in favor and 4 opposed.

C. Work Time Reporting. Haliczer reported that this will start for all NIU employees January 1, 2011. Employees will have to report their activities in 15-minute increments. Jagodzinski asked if employees had to report specifically what they are working on and Haliczer stated that it's just an extra line on the time sheet. Clark stated that they have been reporting their time in athletics and they use a spreadsheet. Latham added that he is unsure of what the reporting tool will look like or if it will resemble what the areas who have been piloting this are doing.

VII. University Committee Reports

The following reports were provided to the Council: Board of Trustees from September 16, 2010, Faculty Senate from September 29, 2010, and Operating Staff Council from October 7, 2010.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 12:10. Motion passed by acclamation.

Minutes respectfully submitted by SPSC Secretary, Donna Smith.