Northern Illinois University  
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting  
MINUTES  
Thursday, December 9, 2010  
Sky Room, HSC, 10:00 A.M.

Present
Pat Anderson, Nancy Apperson, Frankie Benson, Karinne Bredberg, Joan Briscoe, Kay Chapman, Jen Clark, Wally Czerniak, Neil Dickey, Cindy Ditzler, Dena Funkhouser, Dana Gautcher, Missy Gillis, Deborah Haliczer, Anne Hardy, Liz Harris, Ryan Harris, Gail Hayenga, Julia Lamb, Todd Latham, Jenifer Montag, Salvatore Morreale, Jonathon Ostenburg, Lyndon Perkins, Scott Peska, Dawn Roznowski, Donna Smith, Michael Stang, Rachel Xidis

Guests
Tim Griffin, Jay Monteiro

Absent

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

The following additions were made to the agenda: Announcements, add d.) Salary Stabilization Process; Committees, Workplace Issues has a report; and New Business, add b.) Vacated Seat. Lamb asked that a statement of support for domestic partners be added to New Business.

Gills made a motion, seconded by Apperson, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Haliczer made a motion, seconded by Apperson, to approve the SPSC minutes of the November 18, 2010, meeting. Smith made a correction to the second paragraph under University Committee reports; change “advisement summit” to “advising summit.” Motion passed unanimously as corrected.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Announcements (Documents were distributed for each of the following announcements.)
A. Holiday Closure Policy.
C. Severe Weather and University Closure Procedures.
D. Salary Stabilization Process Schedule.

III. Committees of the Council
A. Awards. Gillis reported that there are six people nominated for the SPS Presidential Award for Excellence. The committee will meet after the Council meeting and make the final selections. A solicitation for the SPSC Service Award will soon go out. Gillis also announced that two Council members recently received awards at the First-Year Connections reception. Gautcher received the 2010 First-Year Connections Service Award. Latham, along with his UNIV 201 co-teacher Nathan LaForte, received Outstanding Teaching Team, recognizing them for their work with military students and veterans.

B. Communications. Xidis reported that she is working with Ostenburg on a database for Council member contact information as well as working on updating photos for the Council’s website.


D. Events. No Report.


F. Legislative. Peska reported on actions of the 96th Illinois General Assembly. Senate Bill 1716, which creates the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act, is expected to be signed Governor Quinn. Other legislative items of note are HB 5154, amends the Personnel Record Review Act and provides that disclosure of performance evaluations under the act is prohibited; SB 3514, university borrowing; and HB 5057, provides that holdover appointees, temporary appointees, and acting appointees to offices requiring senate confirmation may not continue in office longer than stated limited periods. The latter affects NIU since NIU has four seats its Board of Trustees (BOT) that expire January 17, 2011. Czerniak noted that he heard that all outstanding bills from FY 2010 have been paid. Dickey asked about the proposal to eliminate the tuition waiver benefit for dependents and Peska responded that after that went to committee there was no additional movement.

G. Technology Resources. No report.

H. Workplace Issues. Clark reported that the committee continued to research temporary appointments at other universities similar to NIU. She presented Council members with a proposal (Appendix A). In short, the proposal is asking that temporary SPS who have been employed for more than five years be able to accrue vacation and receive a pay-out on unused vacation time upon leaving the university. The committee selected five years since this is the time when employees are vested in the SURS. Ostenburg asked how other institutions handle fiscal year restrictions for grants. Benson responded that vacation and sick leave seems to be the same as regular SPS at other universities. It was also noted that other universities, as well as NIU, appreciate long-term grant funded projects and tend to keep funding those even if grant funding is no longer available and that at the University of Illinois-Chicago, they take off the top the funds for vacation and sick leave and put that aside for future disbursements, and UIC temporary SPS are able to accrue their benefits. It was reported that several committee members met with the staff in the Office of Sponsored Projects. They explained that indirect costs can be banked and that salary packages for grant funded SPS include benefits. However, those employees had questions and recommended that the Workplace Issues representatives also speak with NIU Controller Keith Jackson. Stang pointed out that not all temporary SPS are on grants and it was clarified that the university could set
aside resources for those employees for whom grant funding doesn’t apply. Several Council members provided examples of other temporary SPS.

The Council discussed the issues related to this committee’s proposal: 1) what are the fiscal impacts and 2) should the policy be retroactive or from this point forward. Czerniak stated that the Council should pass this; it’s hard to believe there are employees at NIU with over 15 years of service without the same benefits as regular SPS. Haliczer acknowledged the hard work of this committee and that it’s important to lay out the next steps. She suggested that more research be done so that the proposal can be refined and details can be added. Latham also suggested that a timeline be developed and it would help to add results from the survey for discussion with President Peters and Steve Cunningham. It was also clarified that despite previous SPSC work on this issue, no formal proposal has gone forward from the Council in the past. Clark suggested that it will help to have this before as many bodies as possible for a united front.

Apperson made a motion, seconded by Perkins, to accept the Workplace Issues Committee’s proposal as presented to put support behind the concept, and then suggested that it go back to the committee for it to be refined. Motion passed unanimously. Haliczer asked if the Council is also recommending having this put on the agenda for the University Benefits Committee and Clark responded that the proposal is not quite ready for that.

I. Vice President. Peska presented the report. He noted that the Affirmative Action/Diversity Resources Committee will discuss how frequently diverse populations are represented in publications and media. The Library Advisory Committee reported that the library will have limited hours over the holiday break. Latham made the Athletic Board report and stated that donations of tickets to the UDrove Humanitarian Bowl can be made on behalf of Huskie Athletic Support Fund.

IV. Old Business

A. SPS Survey. Haliczer reported that due to scheduling conflicts and technical difficulties there is no report.

B. Grievance Procedure Update. Latham reported that this is still tied up in the Rules and Governance Committee of the University Council. He has asked Alan Rosenbaum, Faculty Senate President/University Council Executive Secretary, that it be addressed, with no response. Latham’s next step is to make a formal written request. Haliczer stated that Latham has done a wonderful job of following up with this issue.

V. New Business

A. Time Reporting Procedures. The reporting form that will be in effect January 1, 2011, is to keep the university is in compliance with the State Officials and Employee Ethics Act (SOEEA). Discussion followed. A point was made that this will not be used for evaluation purposes, but the reporting form can be viewed by the top management team in HRS upon request of an employee’s supervisor. It was also noted that this is effective in less than a month, how is this being communicated with the campus community. Latham noted that when he asked the same question he was told that HRS is working on a tutorial. Clark added that she has seen the new program and it will be
easier to use than the one they have been piloting in Athletics. Haliczer said that employees will most likely receive an e-mail the first of the year with a link to the reporting website, which will include the tutorial.

B. Vacated SPSC Seat. Latham read a memo from Brad Badgley that states that he is leaving NIU to take a similar position at Columbia University in Chicago, and that he will have to resign from the SPSC. Latham is appointing Peska to the vacated seat per his privilege as Council president. Haliczer made a motion, seconded by Gautcher, to accept Badgley’s resignation. **Motion passed unanimously.** Haliczer made a motion, seconded by Apperson, to accept the appointment of Peska to the vacated seat. **Motion passed unanimously.**

C. Domestic Partner Benefits. Lamb reported that the Presidential Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (PCSOGI) has been working on having domestic partner benefits recognized at NIU. The commission is asking that all the councils make a statement of support of domestic partner benefits to the BOT. Discussion followed regarding additional sources of this request and that this is to make benefits equitable among all employees. It was noted that this also will be discussed at the University Benefits Committee. Griffin added that domestic partnership includes opposite sex couples. Lamb read exactly what PCSOGI was asking NIU’s councils to support as a motion, which was seconded by Haliczer. Latham stated that he attends a number of meetings and to the best of his knowledge the BOT has yet to take any position one way or the other on this issue and that what they do have before them is incomplete. It doesn’t address opposite sex domestic partners and there’s a student section with details he has yet to see. He expressed concern that any statement the Council may make will be premature. It was then noted that while there are some benefits already available to domestic partners, there are others that are not, e.g., residency issues, and that it’s a matter of equity of benefits for all employees. It was also clarified that the BOT has asked what the employee perspective is on the issue. Ostenburg made a motion, seconded by Apperson, that the SPS Council support a policy that benefits from employment at NIU available to married partners would be made available to domestic partners. Furthermore, the Council believes that the term “domestic partnership” be defined as broadly as possible. Lamb withdrew her earlier motion, with Haliczer’s consent. Haliczer reported that domestic partnership has already been defined by HRS and individuals in a domestic partnership have a long list of documentation that must be provided to HRS to be considered in such a relationship. **Motion passed unanimously.**

VI. **University Committee Reports**

Latham presented the reports. He read from the charge for the Vision 2020 Steering Committee and the Student/Faculty Code of Conduct was discussed. It deals with collegiality and the University Council will pass one for employees then another one for students. Latham asked Council members to review the remainder of the written reports for additional information.

VII. **Other Business**

A. Czerniak made apologies on behalf of all the staff in ITS for the troubles the week of this meeting with the network and downtimes. He added that a request for services is in process for preventative measures.
VIII. Adjournment
Dickey made a motion, seconded by Morreale, to adjourn the meeting. *Motion passed by acclamation*. Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by SPSC secretary, Donna Smith.
Appendix A

**Background**
At NIU, currently, Temporary SPS accrue vacation time, in accordance to the university’s policy, at the same rate as Regular SPS. Regular and Temporary SPS earn vacation if their position is for more than 10 ½ months and greater than or equal to 50% FTE. Any unused vacation days are then able to be accrued to the succeeding, until the maximum number of days is met. On the contrary, Temporary SPS are required to consume all vacation days in the current Fiscal Year and are not able to carry over any unused vacation time, simply stated, if the vacation time is not used, it is lost on June 30th.

This policy creates a hardship for the Temporary SPS group because often times, the constituents of employees are not able to fully consume their vacation time benefit due to departmental schedules, grant activity or among other reasons. Additionally, because of employment classification this policy creates inequity and animosity between co-workers who essentially are working parallel to each other. Although a Temporary SPS employees could potentially be employed for decades.

**Proposal**
We propose for the policy to be uniformly standardized between all employment classes. Northern Illinois University should consider the following measure to achieve employment equity for Supportive Professional Staff (SPS) whose positions are considered temporary and have served consistently for long periods of time. Temporary SPS who have been employed in their current position for five years or longer should be designated as “Vested Temporary” SPS and eligible to accrue vacation and carry over earned vacation days to a maximum of 56 days. This is equal to the amount of vacation Regular SPS may carry over from one fiscal year to the next. At the termination of employment for the “Vested Temporary” employee, accrued vacation time would be paid out according to University Policies and Procedures.

**Conclusion**
The change in policy initiated by this proposal would alleviate the hardship that many employees who have served the University for at least five consecutive years in a temporary position should have access to the benefits in a manner that is closer to the long term positions of Regular SPS rather than those hired for temporary or limited employment situations.