Northern Illinois University  
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting  
MINUTES  
Thursday, February 11, 2010  
Sky Room, 10:00 A.M.

Present
Bradley Badgley, Frankie Benson, Cliff Bottigliero, Steve Builta, Bobbie Cesarek, Jen Clark, Walter Czerniak, Neil Dickey, Dana Gautcher, Deborah Haliczer, Shad Hanselman, Julia Lamb, Todd Latham, Al Mueller, Cynthia Nelson, Jonathon Ostenburg, Scott Peska, Tracy Rogers, Dawn Roznowski, Donna Smith, Michael Stang, Tim Trottier, Craig Williams, Sharon Wyland

Guests
Greg Barker, Tim Griffin, Jay Monteiro, Julia Spears

Absent
Pat Anderson, Monique Bernoudy, Deborah Fransen, Dan House

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

Peska made a motion, seconded by Czerniak, to approve the agenda with the following additions:
   A. Announcements: 1) Diversity Awards, 2) Czerniak announcement
   B. Old Business: 1) Benefits and Insurance

Motion passed unanimously.

Gautcher made a motion, seconded by Lamb, to approve the SPSC minutes of the January 14, 2010, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Guest Speakers—Greg Barker and Julia Spears, National Survey of Student Engagement
Barker and Spears provided a presentation on the campus-wide results of the NSSE. Spears stated that student engagement has been a recent discussion on campus from strategic planning to the baccalaureate review task force to foundations of excellence. It’s important to encourage student engagement because most data show that the more a student is engaged while in college, the more successful they are and the greater the chance that they will stay at that institution. There are two key components of engagement: 1) the amount of time and effort students put in to their studies and educationally purposeful activities, and 2) the ways an institution use its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to encourage student participation. Spears talked about what is the NSSE. It is administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and is a comprehensive assessment of effective practice in higher education. About 500 first-year students and about 600 seniors at NIU were surveyed. Barker reported that overall the sample is representative of the NIU student population. Barker noted that each question on the survey feeds into one of the benchmarks. He then explained the results for each of the benchmarks.
Level of Academic Challenge measured the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance. Questions asked dealt with time spent preparing for class, the number and quality of assignments, course work, and reading materials. Barker noted that NIU compared well with other groups of NSSE institutions.

Student-Faculty Interaction measured level of contact students had with faculty and their perceptions of faculty. Among questions asked were how much students discussed grades with instructors, did students work with faculty on activities other than course work, and the promptness of written or oral feedback. On this benchmark, NIU compared well with other groups of NSSE institutions.

Supportive Campus Environments measured working and social relationships among different groups on campus. Questions asked dealt with how well the campus environment provides support for students to thrive socially and the quality of relationships with other students. The data shows that for this benchmark, seniors look better than first-year students.

Active and Collaborative Learning measured how intensively involved students are in their education and how much collaboration with other students have they experienced. Questions asked dealt with how often students participated in class such as asking questions or making a presentation, did they tutor other students, and how much did they participate in a community-based project. Barker pointed out that NIU seniors still performed as well or better than other groups of NSSE institutions. However, NIU first-year students were below the other groups.

Enriching Education Experience measured complimentary learning opportunities inside and outside of the classroom that augment the academic program. Questions asked dealt with participation in internships, study abroad programs, or independent study of self-assigned course work. For this benchmark, both first-year students and seniors are behind the other groups of NSSE institutions.

Spears then presented the recommendations, which include campus-wide learning communities for incoming freshman, an enhanced and expanded undergraduate research program, and creation of an engagement database to capture the various types of student engagement opportunities across campus. It is also recommended that NIU increase awareness among faculty, staff, and students of NIU’s “high impact educational practices” and encourage the development of more engagement opportunities. Other plans are for an undergraduate research day, April 29; and Research Rookies, piloting in the fall, 2010. Spears also noted that there is a website, http://www.niu.edu/nsse/index.shtml that includes a lot more information.

Ostenburg asked how NIU compared with other similar institutions and Barker responded that the Great Lakes Public institutions in the bar graphs from the slides represent similar institutions. Mueller asked if the survey would be administered again and Spears reported that the plan is to do it every three years.

III. Announcements
A. Council member realignment. Cesarek announced that with the retirement of Norden Gilbert, Ostenburg has become a voting member with Shad Hanselman from development becoming a new alternate.

B. February 14 Remembrance. Cesarek reported that there will be two events. The first will be a wreath ceremony. Attendees will gather in the MLK Commons at 3:00 and walk to the Forward Together Forward Memorial Garden for a wreath laying ceremony to be followed by a reception in the HSC Ballroom. The second event will be a Candlelight Vigil from 6:00 to 6:30 in the MLK Commons, also followed by a reception.

C. President Commission to Review Distribution of Raises across University Divisions. Cesarek explained that this comes out of the Faculty Senate and President Peters asked that SPS and operating staff be represented on the commission. Dan House is the SPS representative. Cesarek added that she and House are communicating on a consistent basis and that there will be a final report by March 19.

D. University Committee Openings. Cesarek reported that appointing SPS to various university committees will be part of the spring election process.

E. Diversity Awards. Haliczer reminded Council members to think of their colleagues for the various awards presented at this time of the year. She added that this is especially important during rough economic/budget times and that a little recognition goes a long way to boost morale.

F. Czerniak report on computer shut-down. Czerniak reported that the earthquake was in part responsible for the computer shut-down on February 10, 2010. The earthquake loosened a relay switch, then a door closure triggered it, shutting down the system. He further explained all the efforts involved in getting the system back up and running.

IV. Committees of the Council

A. Awards. Haliczer announced that the awards reception will be May 4, 2-4, in the HSC Ballroom. She added that notices about nominations for the SPSC Service Award will go out soon, with the selection of the recipient to be made at the March Council meeting. Notices will also go out to solicit nominations for the certificates of recognition. Criteria include presenting at conferences, contributing to publications, earning an advanced degree, and making other significant contributions to the university. The list of recipients for this award will be presented to the Council at the April meeting.

B. Communications Smith reported that the committee did not meet, but acknowledged Xidis’s help with the Sabbatical Survey.

C. Constitution and Elections Mueller reported that the committee is on schedule regarding elections.

D. Events Cesarek reported the next luncheon will be in Ellington’s, March 2. The speaker is Mary Perhay, who will speak about financial planning. Other events are a luncheon with Ken Zehnder in the first week of April and the aforementioned Awards Ceremony.
E. Finance
No report.

F. Legislative
Cesarek asked Peska to be the Council liaison with Zehnder to confirm his talk and clarify the specific topics to be addressed.

G. Technology Resources
Ostenburg will work on the luncheon reservations and personnel data for reapportionment. He asked if he could send automatic appointments to Council members when dates are confirmed and the consensus was yes. Discussion followed regarding moving Council technology services and Ostenburg responded that he should be able to work on that over the summer.

H. Workplace Issues
No report.

I. Vice President
Latham pointed out items of note from his report. The Computing Facilities Advisory Committee elected Jan Gerenstein as chair and it was announced that ITS will move forward with several Apple initiatives. The Libraries Advisory Committee report dealt with budget reductions, issues with Google and copyrights, the moving of journals from print to online, withdrawal of books, and a new strategic plan. The Campus Parking Committee heard that the bike loan program is up to 90 bikes, looked at the six-month review process and finances, and considered a five-year plan to raise rates—going from $100 to $150 by the year 2014. Young pointed out that he voted against any fee increases. The University Benefits Committee heard a report from Steve Cunningham, which dealt with the state’s budget crisis and its impact on benefits.

V. Old Business

A. Steve Cunningham follow-up. There were no additional thoughts on Cunningham’s visit to the Council in January.

B. Sabbaticals.
The survey was sent to SPS. After the committee compiles the results, they will report back to the Council. Cesarek noted that the Board of Trustees continues to be supportive of sabbaticals.

C. Grievance Procedures
Haliczer reported that she will be meeting with the Faculty/SPS Personnel Advisor to review the document.

The committee presented a list of issues being debated. The main issue is whether or not to do a survey now during the difficult financial times the university is experiencing, and if a survey is done, whether or not to do a complete survey or a shortened one. Several Council members made the point that since the last survey was done, there have been a number of new SPS hired and they should have the chance to participate in a survey. Others pointed out that a survey is one of the best ways to get feedback on a variety of issues from the Council’s constituents. Other suggestions were that if a
survey is done soon, it could provide an opportunity for SPS to participate and possibly provide suggested solutions to problems. The timing of a survey was discussed with the consensus being that some time in the fall would be a good time. This was the time of the year the last survey was done. A web-based versus paper survey and the issue of security and anonymity was discussed. It was noted that neither method is 100% secure. It was noted that with the online option, it should be easy enough to print a copy if an individual preferred to complete the survey with that method. The Council next discussed the survey method and Czerniak reported that ITS would be able to administer the survey at no cost. Haliczer made a motion, seconded by Dickey, to proceed with a survey of SPS in a timeframe preferably before the end of May, 2010. The timing of the survey was discussed and that if the Council wanted to impact budget recommendations, having the results by May or June would be too late, and would the individuals who are volunteering their time to create the survey and evaluate the results have the time. The content of the survey was also discussed and the consensus was to keep the 2010 survey as similar to the last one as possible. Motion passed unanimously.

E. Benefits and Insurance. Haliczer reported the University Benefits Committee has asked President Peters if they may survey employees and constituents about how they have been affected by the insurance crisis, which will hopefully help the university work with its community partners in health care. They are hoping for a spring completion date.

VI. New Business

A. Wellness Fair. Cesarek noted that the benefit of participating in the Wellness Fair is to be seen as a Council. Latham added that the last time the Council participated, information was distributed, and there were little giveaways and a suggestion box. Monteiro reported that the OSC has found it an informal atmosphere; people tend to tell the representatives at the booth things they might not feel comfortable bringing to a formal meeting. Cesarek asked the Council who might be able to commit some time to this and received a positive response. She stated that the Events Committee will work on this.

VII. University Committee Reports

Cesarek encouraged Council members to review the reports. She also noted that the faculty representatives to the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee and the Finance, Facilities and Operations Committee of the Board of Trustees have the opportunity to meet with the respective administrators prior to those meetings. She has asked that she and Monteiro have that same opportunity with regards to the Legislative, Audit and External Affairs Committee.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, SPSC secretary