Northern Illinois University
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, May 20, 2010
Sky Room, 10:00 A.M.

Present

Guests
Bev Espe, Tim Griffin, Sabrina Hammond, Steve Lux, Jay Monteiro, Michelle Pickett, Denise Rode, Gip Seaver

Absent
None

I. Call to Order
After a good-bye reception hosted by SPS Council President Cesarek, the meeting was called to order at 10:20 a.m. Council executive committee members presented Cesarek with farewell gifts and she acknowledged current Council members and those who returned as guests.

The following items were added to the agenda: Announcements, 1) Materials for Archives, 2) State University Annuitants Association annual meeting, 3) Benefits Choice Period, 4) Faculty/Staff Annual Fund. There was one correction, change the year of the meeting from 2009 to 2010. Gautcher made a motion, seconded by Peska, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

There was one correction to the minutes. Under New Business, add “two” before meetings in the third line. Rogers made a motion, seconded by Apperson, to approve the SPSC minutes of the April 8, 2010, meeting as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Guest Speakers—Earl “Gip” Seaver and Denise Rode; Foundations of Excellence®.
A. Seaver and Rode gave the Council a PowerPoint presentation on the status of the Foundations of Excellence® (see Appendix A). Rode provided the background on the process. The Foundations of Excellence® developed out of the strategic plan and is a comprehensive look at the first-year experience. In the fall of 2008, they began a two-year process, looking at the first-year experience for freshmen only at this time. Seaver added that they have begun to collect some data on transfer students. Rode noted that this has involved over 100 faculty, staff, and students, and has been a very transparent process. Rode explained that the Foundations of Excellence® is a national initiative and collaborative venture, headed by John Gardner, who is the top name in the field of the first-year experience. The process
looks at nine foundational dimensions: philosophy, organization, learning, faculty, transition, all students, diversity, roles and purposes, and improvement. The process also involved data collection and evaluation of results. Results and recommendations developed out of the evidence to date and involve six themes: oversight and coordination, communication, programming, environment, academic advising, and reward and regard. Seaver outlined the next steps, then he and Rode asked the CUC for comments and questions. Cesarek asked what SPS can do. Seaver noted that an advisory committee is being developed and they will look for SPS employees to have representation on that committee. There are also plans for adding to SPS orientation an emphasis on how to better serve NIU students, especially first-year students. Rode added that one of the recommendations from the self-study is to develop common messages, which will be shared with all employees. Examples of messages will be stressing the importance of attendance and encouraging students to try to complete their degrees in four years (they need to try to get 30 hours credit by the end of their freshmen year). These messages will start with orientation and they will be reinforced through other venues such as UNIV 101 classes and residence hall meetings. Lux asked if the messages will get communicated internally as well as with prospective students and parents. Rode responded that the communication will have to happen at multiple levels. Seaver noted that the new portal—for better communicating with students and their families—will help with this. Dickey asked if there are programs that help students deal with the fact that they are in a new environment, sharing varying cultures with other students. Seaver stated that college readiness needs to include social factors and how to survive in the culture of higher education. He added that there is a committee that is working with several high schools and community colleges on this issue. Expectations of students also need to be discussed with them, for example what is and what is not appropriate behavior. Rode reported that Gail Jackey is the SPS representative for Foundations of Excellence® and has been a tremendous asset. Perkins asked if NIU is emulating certain models and Seaver responded that the institution is looking at best practices from many institutions. For example, they are working with all the departments to develop four-year plans for all the major programs. Rogers mentioned the LEAD program, a peer mentoring program at the Illinois Math and Science Academy, as another model for best practices. Hayenga suggested that more lower-division courses be offered later in the day because it’s been shown that students of this age group have a more difficult time making it to earlier classes. She added that it needs to be better communicated with students why they need to take some of the courses they are being required to take. Stang added that there are multiple ways to help; it’s every employee’s job to try to connect with the first-year students. Rode noted that the Office of Orientation is looking for Faculty/Staff mentors for the fall.

III. Announcements

A. Nominations are being sought for the presidential commissions. Contact the following people if interested:

President’s Commission on Persons with Disabilities
Greg Long, Chair, glong@niu.edu, (815) 753-6508
Web page: http://www.niu.edu/pcpd/
Membership List: http://www.niu.edu/u_council/commbook0910/disabilities.htm

President’s Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
B. **Materials for Archives.** Smith reported that she will be sending copies of the minutes and agendas from FY 2010 and asked for suggestions for anything else from this year that should be archived.

C. **State University Annuitant’s Association Annual Meeting.** This event is June 22 in Springfield. See their website at suaa.org for additional information.

D. **Benefits Choice Period.** This is a reminder that this year’s Benefits Choice Period will end May 31, 2010.

E. **Faculty/Staff Annual Fund.** Cesarek noted that Shad Hanselman, fellow Council member and director of the annual fund, asked that she report that SPS make up 30% up the participation in the current campaign.

### IV. Committees of the Council

A. **Awards**

Cesarek reported on the SPS Awards Ceremony. She noted that it was very well done, refreshments were good, and Barb Rice from Human Resource Services did an excellent job setting things up. She added that President Peters appreciated being included and noted that it was nice to hear about all the good things that SPS employees are doing.

B. **Communications**

No report.

C. **Constitution and Elections**

Mueller reported that the election process is in progress. Out of seven nominations for SPSC president, two have accepted, four have declined, and one is undecided. June 2 is the target for putting out ballots for votes for both president and Council representatives and results should be available for the June Council meeting. Mueller thanked Ostenburg for his technical help.

D. **Events**

Cesarek reported that there were about 40 people attending the April 13 luncheon with Ken Zehnder. For this lunch, the process was streamlined (with attendees sending in their menu selections ahead of time and paying upfront) and went smoother. She encouraged the Events Committee to continue to consider that venue.
E. Finance
Chemers reported that the Council’s budget is in good shape. She added that Council members purchasing items really should be doing this with a purchase requisition rather than asking for reimbursement afterwards. Discussion followed regarding what kinds of items Council members are purchasing (example is plaques from Nathan Winston). Cesarek asked Chemers to write up procurement procedures for the Council’s committees.

F. Legislative
Peska reported that the legislators should return to work the week of May 14. If no budget agreement is reached by May 31, a 3/5 vote is needed to pass it. He also reported that SB 642 passed, which will allow universities to borrow money. Regarding SB 365, which deals with the general assembly scholarships, Gov. Quinn has said he will veto. Upcoming amendments to that bill may place restrictions on how legislators disperse these funds. In addition, it was noted that state universities are expecting a flat budget. Cesarek stated the best thing NIU employees can do is stay updated and continue to monitor the budget update link through the NIU web page.

G. Technology Resources
Ostenburg continues to work with the Elections Committee on elections. Czerniak reported that ITS will continue to provide Ostenburg with what he needs with regards to the Council and is working on automating a lot of what he has been doing manually.

H. Workplace Issues
Clark reported that the committee is waiting for the results of the survey.

I. Vice President
No report.

V. Old Business

A. Grievance Procedures
In Haliczer’s absence, Griffin gave an overview of the changes. This committee is working on ensuring that records are not kept in Human Resource Services to avoid any conflict of interest issues. Czerniak made a motion, seconded by Apperson, to approve the revisions to the University Grievance Procedure as presented. Motion passed unanimously. See Appendix B.

B. Sabbaticals.
Lux reported that he, Haliczer, and Jack King had put together a proposal, but decided to get additional feedback. Therefore a survey was sent to SPS employees, for which they received 74 responses. Some of the roadblocks to sabbaticals that employees mentioned were that there is no one else to do the job in their absence, no project is planned, and/or no time to complete a project. Other SPS mentioned that they were not aware that they are eligible for a sabbatical. Respondents also noted that if the sabbatical parameters were modified, they would be more likely to consider a sabbatical. Lux felt that the responses justified the initial proposal; that sabbaticals need to be more flexible for SPS and that proposal will move forward. There was a suggestion that the SPSC website be used to better inform SPS about sabbaticals.

C. SPS Survey Update
Nelson reported that there is about a 25% response rate to-date. The committee will see the preliminary results in the next couple of weeks.

VI. **New Business**

A. **SPSC Retreat.**
   Cesarek suggested that Council members consider another retreat, if not this year, then definitely for next year. She added that it actually might be more beneficial to wait until the survey results are compiled.

B. **College of Education Dean’s Search.** Latham reported that Dr. La Vonne I. Neal has been appointed the new dean for the College of Education.

C. **NIU Directory.** Cesarek noted that the new Council should consider getting the Council listed in the NIU Directory.

VII. **University Committee Reports**

Cesarek reported that she will e-mail the necessary reports.

VIII. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, SPSC Secretary