Northern Illinois University  
Supportive Professional Staff Council Meeting  
MINUTES  
Thursday, December 15, 2011  
Sky Room, HSC, 10:00 A.M.

Present  
Pat Anderson, Nancy Apperson, Cliff Bottiglieri, Karinne Bredberg, Steve Builta, Kay Chapman, Neil Dickey, Angela Dressen, Samantha Fisher, Dena Funkhouser, Dana Gautcher, Deborah Haliczer, Anne Hardy, Ryan Harris, Holly Holliiday-Jones, Julia Lamb, Todd Latham, Debra Miller, Tris Ottolino, Scott Peska, Mark Pietrowski, Donna Smith, Mike Stang, Brian Walk, Rachel Xidis, Phil Young, Rita Yusko

Guests  
Tim Griffin, Liz Guest, Brian Hemphill, Celeste Latham, Donna Schoenfeld, Andy Small

Absent  
Gail Hayenga

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

Builta made a motion, seconded by Ottolino, to approve the agenda. Small asked that the Operating Staff Council report be added to the agenda. Motion passed unanimously as amended.

Ottolino made a motion, seconded by Haliczer to approve the SPSC minutes from the November 17, 2011, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

II. Announcements:

A. Outstanding Women Student Awards and Wilma D. Stricklin Award. An SPS representative to the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women asked that these awards be announced. The notices for these awards were e-mailed to Council members due to earlier deadlines.

B. Lamb reported that a number of announcements were sent out from the Presidential Commission on the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. She will compile all the notices and send to Council members. They deal mostly with their awards and scholarships.

C. Haliczer reported on ethics training. She said that operating staff were the most compliant with all of them completing the training. SPS were next with only one person not completing the training.
III. Guest Speaker:

A. Brian Hemphill, Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Transfer of SPS Positions. Hemphill was in attendance to express his concerns over the potential that some SPS positions may be converted to civil service due to an audit conducted by the Merit Board Office of the State University Civil Service System (SUCSS). He reported that a number of SPS positions in his division have been flagged to convert to civil service, such as housing and dining positions and admissions counselors. These are positions that require a lot of time travel and student contact and his concern is that if they become civil service positions, some of the responsibilities could be limited. Other concerns are with the hiring process. When a position is civil service, per the SUCSS statute, only Illinois citizens (with only one exception) may apply. This seriously limits the ability to recruit quality candidates to a position. In addition, applicants must pass a civil service exam and only candidates with the top three scores are sent to interview. The hiring department is unable to select candidates based on their experience and qualifications. He added that being in the civil service system puts employees at a disadvantage for promotion and locks them in to salary ranges and promotional lines. Hemphill reported that there are other universities resisting the changes and it may not be too late to save these SPS positions. He asked Council members if they could start voicing similar concerns. Celeste Latham stated that HRS did push back about immediately having to convert positions and that anyone currently in one of these positions would not have to become civil service. The position gets flagged, and then converts to civil service when it becomes vacated. Latham reported that the Workplace Issues Committee has looked at this issue; there have been SPS employees who have had their pay affected when they go to civil service. He added that another question that needs to be asked is how valid are the civil service exams. Discussion followed regarding civil service exams. C. Latham clarified that there are exams that require a review of credentials; a coordinator looks at a resume/vitae in relationship to the job qualifications. She added that often tests are rewritten to bring them up-to-date. Dickey noted that his department just went through this process and had a couple of job descriptions modified so they fit a civil service classification. C. Latham explained that if the majority of the duties in a job description match a civil service position, that is how it will be classified. Another question was if there is a list of the positions that will be converted to civil service. C. Latham responded that there currently is no list of positions that have been tagged to be audited by the SUCSS. It was also clarified that being in a civil service position doesn't necessarily mean one receives an hourly wage and overtime. There are a number of civil service positions with exempt status. Small clarified that from his perspective, he appreciates that there are a wide range of jobs available for civil service (operating staff) employees as well as promotional opportunities. Peska asked how this will affect the university long-term as the state provides less support but increases regulations. Hemphill was unsure of the long-term effects and added that many policies that are in place have little or no funding attached such as the annual ethics training and SOEEA compliance. C. Latham added that HRS is hearing that employees are becoming anxious about their jobs and they need to be encouraged to take advantage of the Employee Assistance Program.
B. Donna Schoenfeld, SPS Representative to the Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee. Schoenfeld stated that the purpose of the committee is to keep the president informed of campus security and environmental quality. They meet three times per semester. They hear and discuss concerns that have to do with safety, security, and building maintenance. The committee is divided into three subcommittees: exterior environmental quality, interior environmental quality, and safety and security. Some of the things the committee has accomplished recently have been to improve safety in the parking deck by increasing lighting and adding more signage. Other safety concerns regarding the parking deck, specifically break-ins at the beginning of the fall semester, were brought to the committee by students. Other issues discussed have been campus beautification and enforcing smoking regulations. Latham asked Schoenfeld what she would like from the Council. She asked that if Council members notice areas of concern to let her know at dschoenfeld@niu.edu. There’s also a president’s stay safe suggestion box at staysafe@niu.edu.

IV. Committees of the Council
Latham reported that he asked committee chairs to report on the progress of their committees over the last six months and what they are planning for the coming year.

A. Awards. Gautcher reported that the first part of the academic year is relatively quiet for the Awards Committee. They just completed the nomination process for the Presidential SPS Award for Excellence with 11 nominations received. She thanked Ostenburg and Xidis for their assistance with publicizing that award. In the next six months, in addition to making the selection of recipients of this award, the committee will solicit nominations for the SPS Service Award and Certificates of Recognition. The committee also works with HRS to plan the awards reception, which will be held in April. It was announced that Barb Rice, who does most of the work on the reception, is retiring. Mollie Montgomery from the Provost’s Office will be taking her place. There was praise for both Rice and Montgomery from a number of Council members in attendance.

B. Communication. Xidis reported that the committee has worked on moving the website to the new template and added a new legislative update link. In the coming six months the committee will continue to work as it has been and will train committee members in how to use the new web management system.

C. Constitution & Elections. Stang reported that the last six months have been focused on elections of new members, Council officers, and the appointments of SPS representatives to university committees and commissions. He also reported that Dawn Roznowski has resigned from the university and Karinne Bredberg will replace her as the voting representative. Stang will review the elections results to find someone to replace Bredberg as an alternate.

D. Events. Hardy reported that in the fall semester there was a guest speaker lunch with Jim Lockard, the NIU faculty and SPS representative to SURS; a Pizza Pros after hours/tail gate event; and the holiday reception to take place later today. In the spring the committee is planning another lunch and has already been in contact with
two potential speakers. The committee also bought an SPSC banner that can be displayed at various events.

E. Finance. Funkhouser reported that there are still funds available and has made arrangements to have food provided at the meetings next year.

F. Legislative. Peska reported that the committee has met three times this semester. One of their accomplishments was to work with the Communications Committee on the legislation link from the SPSC website. The link includes templates and guidelines for contacting legislators. He thanked Xidis for her work on that.

G. Technology Resources. Walk made the report for Ostenburg. The newsletter is almost complete and Ostenburg will work on the shopping cart over the break.

H. Workplace Issues. Lamb reported that the committee is working on several issues that were carried over from last year. The temporary SPS proposal has gone to the University Benefits Committee for their review and they have given their approval in principle. HRS is to do an impact study with regards to some of the recommended changes. A resolution regarding rehires of employees was put together and sent to General Counsel for review. This issue is on hold due to pending state legislation on the same issue. The committee will hear from a guest speaker regarding 360° evaluations. The committee has been monitoring the progress of mandatory supervisory training. They are working to pull together a list of resources to provide to SPS employees to better assist students. Related to that, Lamb added that the University Council is reviewing a more formal grievance procedure for students that isn’t already covered under current policies such as grade appeals. The committee will ask Council members to help them update the SPS ethics statements. Lamb added that she will be sending a copy to Small with the intent that the two councils can work together. The committee is also monitoring the issue of some SPS positions being converted to civil service. Lastly, they are working on a flow chart of resources and steps to take for employees to refer to when they have a complaint or a grievance; a lot of employees aren’t sure where they need to go when they have an issue.

I. Vice President. Smith asked Council members to let her know if they have any questions. Latham pointed out some concerns he had with the report from the Presidential Commission on Persons with Disabilities and the CAAR Office. Concerns included the fact that a change occurred and how did they determine the new policy and what external input was solicited, why hasn’t the change in evaluation process been communicated to faculty and staff, will the office be providing any training, what does "invisible" disabilities mean exactly, and what aspects of social justice are used. Ottolino was interested in how this would affect her standard operating procedures. Smith will follow-up with the director of CAAR.

V. Old Business

VI. New Business

A. Request from Virginia Cassidy, vice provost for academic planning and development. Latham announced that he received a request from Cassidy to provide her with names of SPS who could assist with the planning for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation process. He delegated the duty to Smith, who will review the materials and provide Latham with suggestions for potential candidates.

VI. University Committee Reports. The following reports were provided to Council members: Faculty Senate 11/16/11, University Council 11/30/11, and Board of Trustees 12/1/11. Latham pointed out some items of note. From the BOT meeting, they clarified the alcohol policy, which would allow alcohol on campus under certain circumstances, and there was a Vision 2020 update. At the University Council meeting, the Student Association (SA) speaker brought up the use of bond fee revenue. Small provided the Operating Staff Council (OSC) report. They also are revising their ethics statement and will send to Lamb for her review. He reported that the OSC has a dependent scholarship fund and said that it was fairly easy to get it endowed and thought that this would be something the SPS Council would want to look into doing. The OSC awards two $500 scholarships to dependents of NIU operating staff who are attending NIU. The OSC has also been working with the SA on safety concerns. They are looking at holding a safety forum presentation early next year with a panel that would include NIU Police Chief Grady, DeKalb Police Chief Fiethen, and DeKalb County Sheriff Scott. The intent of the forum is to get the word out that NIU and the surrounding community is just as safe as any other “communiversity” with similar demographics. Small asked if the SPS Council would be interested in co-sponsoring the event; at the very least, he asked for SPS attendance. There was a consensus among Council members that this is something that should be supported. Haliczer noted that the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women is looking at increased lighting on campus and she thought the commissions could also get involved. Peska added that there is an Interpersonal Violence Task Force through Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. It was suggested that a “warehouse” of resources could be created to help illustrate the actions NIU is taking to help make campus safer and to improve the perceptions of safety on campus. It was also noted that a survey was done and students do feel safe on campus. It is when they go off campus where they feel less safe.

VII. Adjournment. Peska made a motion, seconded by Builta, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, SPSC Vice President.