Present: Pat Anderson, Nancy Apperson, Cliff Bottiglieri, Karinne Bredberg, Steve Builta, Kay Chapman, Neil Dickey, Angela Dreesen, Samantha Fisher, Dena Funkhouser, Dana Gautcher, Lesley Gilbert, Anne Hardy, Ryan Harris, Gail Hayenga, Holly Holliday-Jones, Michael Kavulic, Julia Lamb, Todd Latham, Janet Love-Moore, Tris Ottolino, Donna Smith, Kathy Smith, Michael Stang, Brian Walk, Rachel Xidis, Phil Young and Rita Yusko

Excused: Deborah Haliczer, Jonathon Ostenburg and Scott Peska

Absent: None

Guests: Tim Griffin, Andy Small and Melanie Thompson

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Supportive Professional Staff Council President Todd Latham. He apologized for the late notice of moving the day’s meeting to a new room.

President Latham offered one amendment to the day’s agenda in addition to correcting the location; he added (c) Wellness Fair under “Announcements”. He asked for any additional additions, hearing none, asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda. The motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Builta and was seconded by Bottiglieri. The motion to approve the amended agenda was passed unanimously.

President Latham asked for corrections to the December 15, 2011, meeting minutes. With no corrections, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Anderson and was seconded by Bottiglieri. The motion to approve the meeting minutes was passed unanimously.

Attendance was taken and a quorum was confirmed.

Guest Speakers

Center for Access-Ability Resources (CAAR) – Melanie Thompson
President Latham introduced Melanie Thompson, Director of the Center for Access-Ability Resources (CAAR), who was attending the meeting to clarify questions/concerns raised by Council. Thompson thanked Council for allowing her to speak and offered personal background. Thompson shared she’s been the CAAR Director for almost a year and a half. She confirmed there’s been a shift in the mission of CAAR, but this was done to help move CAAR more in line with amendments to the ADA Act, which were made in 2008. When she began at NIU, CAAR served about 841 students and now over 850 students receive services from CAAR. She told Council NIU has a larger than average blind, deaf, learning disabled or hard of hearing student population than other US universities. Many NIU students may be identified as having a “Blind Disability” – a disability not visible to the eye (i.e. PTSD or ADHD). Another big change is that all CAAR staff are being cross-trained to be able to assist more of the students coming to the office. She shared CAAR has the highest student to staff ratio in the state.
Thompson addressed four questions asked by Council:

1) In regards to new CAAR policies and whether or not external input was considered before changes were made, she reported students, faculty and staff were all contacted for feedback – along with including substantial benchmarking from universities across the nation. This new mission and vision has been shared on the website and in department marketing over the last year.

2) Thompson confirmed students are no longer denied the opportunity to meet with a staff member without first submitting documentation. She added this change protects the university from lawsuits. Documentation is reviewed to assist with providing proper accommodations for students.

3) Thompson defined again “Invisible Disability” and added that most NIU students fall under this category.

4) Thompson shared with Council that CAAR used to function under a “Medical model of Disability”, but now works under a “Social Justice model of Disability” which is one where the disability is viewed as neutral and partially a result of barriers in one’s environment. CAAR seeks to reduce the environmental barriers for the student.

Thompson opened the floor to questions from Council.

- Council asked if a faculty/staff member can deny a determination of a disability and accommodations for a student. Thompson advised, once CAAR identifies an accommodation/disability for a student, faculty or staff should not deny the student’s accommodation – as CAAR acts as an advocate for NIU and the student. However, faculty and staff can discuss ways or better suggestions regarding how to apply a student’s accommodation.

- Thompson clarified that a student’s accommodation in the classroom begins once identified by CAAR. So, even if a student waits until halfway through the semester to go to CAAR for services, the accommodation is valid from the point identified forward – but is not retroactive. This is why students need to go to CAAR as early as possible to set up accommodations for their classes. It is the student’s responsibility to contact CAAR, so they can contact a student’s instructors in a timely manner.

- A concern was raised regarding how CAAR was making official notifications regarding students – is it being done via email or official written notification. Thompson stated CAAR notifications should come on official department letterhead. However, if a student is receiving a temporary medical accommodation (i.e. brief injury) then that notification may come electronically (via email) since it is only for a short amount of time. She added, NIU does not have to offer temporary modifications, but they do so as good stewards to students.

- Thompson shared with Council she’s never personally experienced a student who was trying to abuse the system by requesting an accommodation they did not really need.

- Thompson asked Council to help support and direct students to CAAR, who they feel may need special services – as some students may be embarrassed to identify themselves or may not know they should be requesting assistance. She reminded Council CAAR has walk-in hours and suggests if possible, the employee go with the student to CAAR. A suggestion was made to ensure offices have brochures or information from CAAR to share with students. (President Latham shared the most recent brochure from CAAR with Council.)

- Concern was raised if any students had addressed concerns regarding the redesigned university webpages or formats – and if so, how are they being handled by CAAR. Thompson said the new main templates are very accessible, if there have been problems it has been with smaller departments with their own webpages and that office is contacted by CAAR and the issue is addressed.
With no further questions or comments, President Latham thanked Thompson for sharing her time with Council.

**Announcements**

**A. 403(b) Vendor Visits**

President Latham shared with Council a form from Human Resources with the dates of upcoming visits from 403(b) companies for visits. Employees can contact Human Resource Services for more information.

**B. Increments**

It was discussed there are increments being considered for employees, but are subject to Board of Trustee (BOT) approval. A two-tier plan was proposed to SPSC, who suggested in response a three-tier proposal for implementing the proposed increments and SPSC asked for another ½% to be included for the merit pool. President Latham reminded Council if approved; the increments should be included on the March 30, 2012 paychecks and would be retroactive to January 1, 2012.

**C. Wellness Fair**

President Latham advised Council the SPSC has been invited to have a table at the Wellness Fair which is scheduled for Wednesday, March 28, 2012. Council needs to decide if a space is desired, does SPSC want to share a space, what would be distributed to attendees and who would be able to assist with sitting at the table. Input is needed and the deadline to decide upon table space is February 17, 2012. More discussion will be held during the next meeting.

**Committees of the Council**

**Awards**

Gautcher announced the Awards committee had met the previous week to review nominations and select the recipients for the SPS Presidential Award for Excellence. She reported she received 11 nominations, which was an increase from the six the previous year. She briefly described the nomination and review process and commended some nominations for including very thorough details to help the committee in decision making – including how the employee had gone above and beyond their duties or how tasks tied in with strategic university initiatives. The committee has recommended all nominations in the future offer such details.

Before Council began discussing the Committee’s selections for the award, President Latham and Ottolino were asked to leave, since both are among the nominees. Gautcher read the names of the four winners. She asked if there was any discussion. Gautcher made a motion to approve the four employees for the SPS Presidential Award for Excellence. The nomination was seconded by Fisher. **The motion was passed unanimously.**

After President Latham and Ottolino rejoined the Council, Gautcher informed the group the next step is for her to send the names to President Peters for his approval and then the winners will be notified. She added the nominees who were not selected for the award will be given a Certificate of Recognition during the April SPS Awards ceremony. She asked Council to start thinking of names for the SPSC Service Award which will be discussed in February – the nominee is selected from Council members. Call for nominations for the Certificates of Recognition will also go out in February to all SPS employees. Gautcher thanked Young for hosting the Committee at his home for the selection process.
Communications
Xiidis reported there was a joint meeting of Communications and the Ad Hoc PR committees, to discuss merging both groups. The newsletter group will become a subcommittee of Communications and D. Smith will continue to Chair. D. Smith provided an overview of content in the newsletter, some of which needs to be updated and also discussed some of the projects the committee had worked on. Xiidis added she is still trying to schedule Cascade Server Training for some Council members.

Constitution & Elections
Stang announced he is still trying to fill the Alternate vacancy within Division 4 and hopes to find a replacement soon. He added he has started work for the Spring elections and noted no reapportionment is necessary within the Divisions. During the next meeting, he will provide a final schedule for the elections.

Events
Hardy shared two events are planned for this Spring. On Thursday, February 22, 2012, Dennis Barsema will be leading a motivational luncheon in the Chandelier Room of Adams Hall. The second event is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 4, 2012, and will be a panel discussion on student engagement and the student experience as it pertains to the “Vision 2020” plan. Hardy said she is working to finalize panelists, but hopes to have more details next month. She concluded the Committee would like to schedule one more event for Spring.

Finance
Funkhouser was thanked for finding funds in the budget to provide cookies for the meeting. She reported approximately $330 was spent on the December SPS Holiday Open House and there is roughly $1,300 remaining in the budget for this year.

Legislative Issues
Kavulic reported the Legislative link will include some of the new laws which were enacted as of January 1st of this year. As more news becomes available regarding pensions in Springfield, it will be shared with all SPS employees.

Technology Resources
Walk reported the Committee has not met since returning from break, but will soon. They are working with the Communications committee to finalize the newsletter and discussing methods to allow SPS employees to access the document. Ostenburg has also been working with Stang to prepare for the Spring SPSC elections.

Workplace Issues
Lamb shared the Committee will be meeting soon, but they do have the revised “Resolution for Rehiring” to present to Council which will be reintroduced under “Old Business”.

Vice President
D. Smith reminded Council to review her report which was submitted before the meeting. This does include the response from Melanie Thompson, CAAR Director.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Tabled Resolution – Rehiring of NIU Retirees
Council was reminded the Workplace Issues resolution regarding rehiring of NIU retirees had been tabled and sent back for revisions. The document is ready and K. Smith made a motion to place the “Resolution of Suggested Course of Action Regarding the Rehiring of Northern Illinois University Retirees” back on the table before Council for a vote.
The second was made by Love-Moore. **The motion passed to bring the resolution back before Council.**

Ottolino made a motion to approve the amended “Resolution of Suggested Course of Action Regarding the Re-hiring of Northern Illinois Retirees”. The motion was seconded by Bredberg. President Latham asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a vote on the amended resolution. **The motion to approve the amended resolution passed unanimously.** Council requested President Latham send the resolution to President Peters and his Cabinet members and share it with fellow Councils. A request was made for Latham to date and sign when the resolution was approved by Council.

**B. Transfer of SPS Positions**
Council addressed concerns raised last month regarding SPS positions possibly being transferred back to Civil Service positions. Council raised many areas of concern:
- Difference in Hiring Process (National search vs. State search)
- Benefits and salary ranges for both systems
- Resume review vs. receiving a list of scored individuals
- Morale of employees
- Bumping Rights

After much discussion Council agreed it does not want to discourage Civil Service procedure, but wants to review both processes and discuss why some positions have been flagged. Many on Council believe now is the time to define the SPS positions to show how they are not Civil Service related. Many also are not as familiar with the Civil Service structure and would like to learn how it compares and differs with SPS positions.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Increments**
Council again discussed proposed pending increments for employees. President Latham reiterated that SPSC advocated for a merit component to the proposed increments for employees. Council expressed concern regarding how SPS can have a merit component applied appropriately and fairly to all SPS employees as there is no common criteria to follow. Latham asked Stang to Co-Chair a group of Council members and external campus experts to work on a matrix of criteria for merit raises – reviewing current processes and propose a plan that would be used and enforced by the Administration. Latham asked Council to send names of individuals willing to serve on the committee to him or Stang.

**B. Ad Hoc PR Committee Status**
President Latham informed Council since the SPSC newsletter was established, many of the Ad Hoc goals had been met and was now a subcommittee of Communications, the Ad Hoc committee needed to be dissolved. Motion to dissolve the Ad Hoc PR committee was made by D. Smith and seconded by Bottiglieri. **The motion passed unanimously to dissolve the Ad Hoc PR committee.**

**University Committee Reports**
President Latham asked Council to review the University Committee Reports for Faculty Senate, Board of Trustees, University Council and Operating Staff Council which were submitted via email before the meeting. If anyone has questions, he asked to please email him.
Adjournment
President Latham asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion to adjourn was made by Apperson and was seconded by Bottiglieri. The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by
Lesley Gilbert, SPSC Secretary