The position of the Faculty/SPS Personnel Advisor is a two-year term that is elected through the Faculty Senate of the University. A third year extension is possible. The advisor is evaluated each year by a committee of the Faculty Senate, and that information is shared with the Senate and Provost. This was my first year in this position and I have thoroughly enjoyed this experience. It has allowed me to utilize my skills as a professional counselor as well as my experience as a faculty member at NIU for over 23 years in assisting colleagues. I am also very grateful to all those who supported me in this transition time. I have made excellent contacts with other offices of support across the university and have tried to fulfill my professional responsibilities by listening carefully to those who seek my services, referring people to appropriate offices for assistance, denoting by-laws and University policies and procedures that are relevant, advising in a fair and supportive way, and being available to attend meetings when necessary. The philosophy of this position requests that I try to resolve issues that are brought to me as quickly as possible, at the lowest possible level, through an informal process if possible. In most cases, informal discussion has been successful, but in several cases, submitting a formal grievance became necessary under Article 11. Article 11 details the grievance procedures for faculty and staff. This same format it used for both faculty and for SPS personnel.

The 2012-2013 Academic year seemed to be an excessively busy year for the position of Faculty/SPS Personnel Advisor. The number of people that I worked directly with increased from the previous year with approximately 51 direct consulting contacts made with Faculty/SPS. Additionally, I had contacts with 12 administrators, chairs, or deans. Eleven of the 51 contacts were with SPS personnel. Information was also gathered from the university-wide survey evaluation that was sent out across campus in April, 2013. Personal and confidential evaluations were sent to those people I had interacted with over the academic year. According to the feedback received, 141 people accessed the survey and 31 of those returning the evaluation indicated they had consulted directly with me. Additional responders had attended workshops that I had presented and others were involved in meetings with me.

While confidentiality inhibits me from giving a detailed account of the issues brought to me, I can share some general themes that seemed to govern the consulting that I did in my role as the Faculty/SPS Personnel Advisor.

**Faculty:** Regarding Faculty contacts, I was involved in 5 tenure cases and 1 promotion case. These cases were varied and took a great deal of time, two of them covering almost the entire year. There is a great deal of pain and anguish that gets wrapped up in a tenure case. I worked at being sensitive to pertinent issues and offered a supportive role to the faculty. These cases involved many email exchanges and numerous meetings with the
faculty. Tenure and/or promotion cases are further exacerbated by unclear guidelines in criteria and procedure manuals that guide these decisions.

The second most noted reason for consulting from faculty came from difficulties with either colleagues or with chairs. Sometimes these issues were resolved quickly by listening and offering a suggestion, or supporting an idea from the faculty member involved. In three cases I did mediation work with those engulfed in the conflict. One case is still continuing. Other topics of consultation included clarification of job roles, workload concerns, salary concerns, retirement, scheduling, academic freedom, resource availability, disability issues, and advocacy work. In most cases these concerns were handled through informal meetings and discussions that ended in consensus or a resolution agreement between all parties.

Since I was new to this position at the start of the year, I used the opportunity to talk to faculty units as a way to help establish my role and make contact with university personnel. I continue to be surprised to learn how many people do not know I am available for them as a contact. I visited four departments and two college senate meetings to introduce myself and let people know what I did and how I could be contacted. I believe this was especially helpful for new chairs and deans.

I also teamed up with Sarah Klaper, Ombudsperson, and Deborah Haliczer, Human Resources, through Murali Krishnamurth and the Professional Development Office to offer two three-hour workshops for faculty and staff. In November, 2012, we offered a workshop on “Managing Conflict in Healthy Ways” for faculty and staff, and on March 26, 2013 we did a training on “Resolving Conflict: Guidelines for Academic Administrators”. Both of these were very well attended and received.

Since my own departmental teaching obligations conflicted at times of attending various meetings that I wanted to attend, I tried to have a physical presence across campus whenever possible. I attended Faculty Senate meetings and SPS Council, served on the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources Advisory Committee, and attended an occasional presidential commission meeting. I hope to continue to attend as many events as I am able. I was also able to meet with President Baker upon his arrival and hope to offer assistance to him and support the new direction of the university in whatever ways are possible for the coming year.

**SPS personnel:** I consulted with 11 SPS people over the academic year. In many cases we were able to resolve issues informally with conversations or meetings. In two cases, grievances were filed in order to move toward a meaningful resolution. All of these cases were resolved without moving to the formal hearing level. Common themes for which I was consulted by SPS personnel included termination or non-renewal of contracts, conflict with colleagues, miscommunications or conflict with supervisors or managers, reprimands, academic freedom, and job descriptions. Working with SPS Personnel is very different than faculty as they often feel they are more vulnerable to retaliation and consequently are more fearful to take any action. I am glad I am able to provide a confidential ear and an opportunity to talk through the situation. Also, I am able to
provide them university policies and procedures that help to explain current circumstances or possible next steps.

It was good to attend SPS meetings and to speak to people there informally. I also worked to get SPS written more specifically into Article 9 of the job description so that SPS know that I am willing to represent them. Since I am not an SPS person, I know I must work with greater intentionality to be available to their needs. I appreciated the support and referrals that I received from Todd Latham who was SPS President. I also met with Todd every other month to discuss issues and share concerns.

**Conclusion:**
I am honored to have been elected to the position of Faculty/SPS Personnel Advisor. I believe I am a good person for this position based on my training as an educator and counselor, and my tenured experience at the university. I try not to take this for granted and to represent the university in the strongest possible light to help Faculty and Supportive Professional Staff to the best of my ability resolve their situations. People are generally angry, hurt, infuriated, frustrated, and shocked when they contact me. I work with their emotional states. I also respect the NIU Constitution and Bylaws and try to find the best and most applicable resources through the written policies and criteria that will lead to a clearer understanding and resolution for the person who has consulted me. I do not have any power in my position, but I do have a great deal of knowledge regarding resources that can assist each person, and the ability to help people move toward making their own decisions. I have learned so much about the University and I am grateful that I now have a year of experience to bring to this coming academic year. I look forward to continuing in this role and in providing this very important service.