

**Minutes**  
**Operating Staff Council**  
December 7, 2017  
**Sky Room – 9:00 A. M.**

*Present:* Stacey Bivens, Nancy Brown, Ellen Cabrera, Angelica Gutierrez-Vargas, John Hulseberg, Katja Marjetic, Brian Mihalik, Jay Monteiro, Holly Nicholson, Jeffry Royce, Karen Smith, Mary Wyzard

*Absent:* Barb Andree, Judy Burgess, Cindy Kozumplik, Pamela Pittman, Patricia Wielert

*Guests:* Frances Mitchell, Anna Quider, Andy Small, Pulchratia Smith

**I. Call to Order**

Vice President Nicholson called the regular meeting of the OSC to order at 9:06 A.M.

**II. Roll Call**

Attendance was recorded by Stacey Bivens.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

A motion was made by Cabrera to accept the agenda. The motion was seconded by Marjetic and passed by unanimous vote.

**IV. Approval of November 2, 2017, minutes**

A motion was made by Cabrera to accept the November 2, 2017, minutes. The motion was seconded by Mihalik and passed by unanimous vote. Cabrera asked about the statement under **X. Committee Reports**, Council of Councils Ad Hoc Committee, regarding using extra budget money to pay members of the NIU Jazz Band and the NIU Steel Pan Band. Nicholson stated that she had e-mailed Cristine Black about this issue and has not yet received an answer. Nicholson said that in lieu of payment, that perhaps the purchase of a gift basket would be suitable. Hulseberg asked that the statement “a campus-wide survey to Faculty Senate and Supportive Professional Staff Council...” under **VII. Public Comment** be changed to “a campus-wide survey to shared governance bodies...” A motion was made by Gutierrez-Vargas to accept the amended minutes. The motion was seconded by Hulseberg and passed by unanimous vote.

**V. Treasurer’s Report**

OSC Treasurer Wielert was unable to attend the meeting, so Vice President Nicholson went over the Treasurer’s report. She stated that the OSC is considering

closing the checking account at the Northern Illinois Federal Credit Union and instead delivering scholarship funds to the Foundation via money order. At the credit union, each time there is a new treasurer, the OSC's checking account has to be closed and then reopened. The discussion about the credit union account will be continued at the January OSC meeting. A motion was made by Gutierrez-Vargas to accept the Treasurer's report. The motion was seconded by Smith and passed by unanimous vote.

## **VI. Visiting Committees/Guests**

Anna Quider, Director of Federal Relations for NIU, met with OSC via Skype to update council on the tax reform bill and federal issues that affect operating staff. She started by explaining that currently the Republicans control the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the White House. She said that within Congress there are groups that do not necessarily align with their party when it comes to voting on bills. For example, she mentioned the Tuesday Group, who are several members of the House who are Republicans who tend to be moderate, while there is also the Blue Dog Coalition, a collection of Democrats who tend to lean more conservatively.

Quider stated that the tax reform bill is meant to simplify the tax code, broaden the tax base, lower tax rates, and stimulate economic growth. The bill could have many impacts on students and their families, including education tax credits and related provisions, charitable giving, and non-profits.

The House and Senate passed different versions of the tax reform bill, but they need to agree on a final bill for the president to sign, so they will do conference negotiations. Representatives Roskam and Shimkus from Illinois are members of the House majority negotiating team, so they will be involved in the process. Quider has been in touch with both representatives, so that NIU has a voice in the discussions.

Parts of the tax bill that could affect students specifically are the American Opportunity Tax Credit, the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit (which could be eliminated for part-time students), the 529 college savings plan, and the student loan interest deduction. Section 117 of the tax code would tax benefits not currently taxed. Under the House bill, tuition waivers like those received by NIU operating staff, as well as those received by graduate students, would be taxed as though they were income. Under section 127 in the tax code, the \$5,250 education credit offered by some employers would be taxable.

Charitable giving could decrease by as much as 39 percent as the tax code would double the standard deduction and only 5 percent of people who donate would itemize. There is a proposal to make a universal charitable deduction.

Quider addressed the possibility of the federal government shutting down on December 8, 2017. There was a failure to reach a budget agreement, so a short-term spending bill was put in place, but it expires December 8. The Higher

Education Act needs to be reauthorized. This affects Pell grants, Title IX, and reporting regulations.

The tax reform bill has an effective date of January 1, 2018, In Quider's opinion, the tuition items will likely not be in the final bill.

Hulseberg asked Quider what the OSC can do to help increase the visibility of the Office of Federal Relations. She replied that she could arrange more meetings when she is on campus. Her reports are posted on the Board of Trustees website.

## **VII. Public Comment**

None

## **VIII. Announcements/Correspondence**

A. Nicholson reminded OSC members that John Heckman will be our guest at the January 4, 2018, meeting. Send any questions to Mitchell as soon as possible, because the meeting occurs just two days after we return from winter break.

B. Leadership Team Meeting: Nicholson report on behalf of President Andree. Andree attended the leadership meeting on November 14 to hear Catherine Squires report on how the NIU Foundation is moving forward aggressively to raise more unrestricted funds for scholarships. She reported that FY16 was the best fundraising year ever, receiving \$28 million in gifts and pledges but FY 17 was very difficult, raising only \$15.5 million. Their goal for FY 18 is modest at \$17.8 million. NU's return on investments of \$74 million was approximately +14% which was better than Harvard University's! The Angel Touch scholarship opportunity was started in FY 15 to help keep students in school by paying off past due balances in a one-time award. The Foundation is attempting to raise more unrestricted funds for this valuable aid to struggling students.

There is an Alumni Letter Writing campaign ongoing since April 2017. Alumni write letters to prospective students on their business letterhead to show how NIU boosted their success.

## **IX. Shared Governance Reports**

### **A. [Board of Trustees](#)**

Met November 16. Two students spoke, and both were very passionate about what they had to say. One talked about campus safety, and the other spoke about Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Another topic covered was the cost of the upcoming renovation of the Holmes Student Center.

Two faculty also spoke and questioned how the costs of repeated FOIAs impacted the budget and that, generally, the accounting office is not responsive to requests for information. The other question regarded how the renovation of HSC is being funded, since it's estimated to cost \$20 million, but only \$12 million is from Build

America bonds. Where is the remaining \$8 million coming from? The Trustees had no replies to these questions.

The Presidential Goals were approved without discussion. They are: Grow student enrollment and success; Enhance Fiscal sustainability of NIU; Implement Program Prioritization; Foster an organizational culture that is ethical and accountable; Increase capacity for research, innovation and regional engagement; and Increase student satisfaction and engagement. Details about these goals and measurements can be found at [niu.edu/president/about/goals](http://niu.edu/president/about/goals).

#### B. Faculty Senate

No report

#### C. Supportive Professional Staff Council (SPSC)

No report

#### D. University Council

No report

#### E. University Advisory Committee (UAC)

No report

### **X. Committee Reports**

#### A. Elections and Appointments

Nicholson reported. OSC President Andree wants an alternate to be available to attend the meetings of the President's Search Prep Committee. A motion was made by Hulseberg to name Royce as alternate to the committee. The motion was seconded by Brown and passed by unanimous vote. There is an open position for an operating staff employee to serve on the search committee for a permanent Ethics and Compliance Officer. A motion was made by Hulseberg to name Andree as the employee to serve on the committee. The motion was seconded by Wyzard and passed by unanimous vote. There is a position open on the University Benefits Committee. Pat Wielert has expressed interest in it, however she was not present at the OSC meeting for the council to vote.

#### B. Employee Morale

Mihalik reported. Kozumplik will be meeting with the University Benefits committee today to present the Give a Day, Take a Day proposal. It has been approved by both the OSC and the Supportive Professional Staff Council.

#### C. Legislative Committee

No report

#### D. Public Relations/Activities

Smith reported. The committee discussed the new employee letters. The letters have been sent to Mitchell for changes. If anyone has items for the newsletter, please turn those in to Andree. Bowling night is scheduled for Thursday, January 11, 2018. A food drive for the Huskie Food Pantry is planned. The pantry is especially in need of paper products. The application for the operating staff dependent scholarship award is now online.

#### E. Workplace Issues

No report

#### F. Administrative Professionals Advisory Council (APAC)

No report

#### G. Employee Advisory Committee (EAC)

Small reported. He announced at the Merit Board meeting that he is retiring. There will be an election here at NIU to find another representative. The term is usually four years, however the first term for the newly-elected representative might be five years in order to get it in line with the other representatives.

Small shared that there was discussion and action on a proposed change to the Merit Board policy relating to employee benefits. This item sets the baseline of benefits for all state university employees including holidays, funeral leave, vacation accumulation, sick leave, etc. EAC helped to establish the baseline and successfully helped to get the Merit Board to agree that any university can enhance the minimum benefits, but cannot diminish them. For instance, NIU allows long term (over 15 years) hourly civil service employees to accumulate 56 vacation days. The baseline minimum is 50 days and that is the standard at other universities.

Also, the OEIG (Office of the Executive Inspector General) has charged the Merit Board with defining what job descriptions are in the civil service system. This will set the ground rules for which positions can be migrated over to the Supportive Professional Staff/Academic Professional category and which jobs need to be in the civil service system. This could even potentially affect jobs that have been creatively moved out of the civil service system, and now must be moved back into the system. This is extremely important when discussing job security and promotional lines. The Merit Board voted to continue to work on the current procedure. EAC supports it becoming a rule rather than a procedure so that it is enforceable. The Merit Board admitted that it has not been “doing its job” when it comes to enforcing this current procedure. This could affect up to 3,000 jobs.

Smith noted that many directors and assistant directors here at NIU are classified as supportive professional staff when they should be civil service.

## **XI. Prior Business**

### **A. Green Team Resolution**

Nicholson read through the OSC's Green Team Resolution regarding sustainability. A motion was made by Mihalik to ratify the resolution. The motion was seconded by Marjetic and passed by unanimous vote.

## **XII. New Business**

## **XIII. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Brown to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Wyzard and passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 10:47 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stacey Bivens, Secretary  
Operating Staff Council