

Operating Staff Council Meeting  
April 2, 2020  
**Teams Meeting**  
**Approved May 7, 2020**  
9:00-12:00 p.m.

**Present:** Gingrich, Guttierrez-Vargas, Hulseberg, Johnson, Kerwin, Kozumplik, Mitchell (Adm. Aide) Monteiro, Nicholson, Royce, Skelley, Smith, Ward, Wielert, Williams, Yates.

**Visitors:** Doederlein, Erickson, Kurpius, Ranken, P. Smith,

**Guest Speakers:** Sol Jensen, VP Enrollment Management, Marketing & Communications  
Renique Kersh, Assoc. VP Provost Engaged Learning  
John Butler, Board of Trustees and NIU Representative to Merit Board

**I. Call to Order:** Royce called meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and asked for a motion to approve the Agenda. (Kozumplik/Nicholson) All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed, the Agenda is approved.

Royce moved to table approval of the March minutes until the next meeting.  
Johnson seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion passed. Approval of the March 2020 minutes tabled until May 2020 meeting.

**II. Treasurer's Report**

Balance \$1,407.57 Includes \$25 deduction for March.

No further expenditures are anticipated. The remaining money will be cleared by Gigi Beaird, Business Manager. Nicholson motioned to approve, seconded by Monteiro. All in favor, none opposed, motion passed, the Treasurer's March 2020 Report approved.

**III. Sol Jensen** on behalf of the administration, expressed how proud the administration is of NIU operating staff employees for their flexibility, and entrepreneurship despite challenges.

**Recruitment:** On the recruitment side every recruitment event has been canceled, moving things to a virtual environment. Operating staff employees can help: be aware of on-campus recruitment events; wear red and black to show Huskie Pride and be watchful for students and their family who look like they may need help finding where they belong. Jensen reminded the council that every single member of the University community can play an important role. Even now we can do this by being a brand ambassador, doing everything we can to promote the strengths of the University. Do not be shy about speaking out about what a great institution we have here at NIU. Jensen shared that they are wrapping up a brand perception survey that will allow them to have greater insight into what the perceptions are of NIU. They surveyed perspective students, parents, admitted students, those who chose not to enroll, faculty, staff, alumni and community. They will have a final report within the next month to share campus wide.

**Retention: Renique Kersh** shared a slide presentation about student success and retention focusing on first and second year students to ensure they return. Seventy-two percent of first year students return and 86% of transfer students return. Kersh believes there is good attrition but poor retention. Kersh explained the four components of retention:

**Reducing Barriers** – policies and procedures that may be creating barriers;

**Re-enrollment** – using a case management system to coordinate retention efforts and track to connect students to resources;

**First Year Focus** – bring students back early and have one week of welcome;

**Equity & Inclusion** – try to find why there are equity/inclusion gaps and put measures in place to reduce those gaps. Retention is possible.

Operating Staff employees can help: reviewing policies and procedures to identify barriers for students. When making policy and procedural changes, consider how those changes might impact students and possibly create unintended consequences. Encourage student involvement. Assess barriers – we are all retention specialists. Be welcoming and helpful and wear red and black. There are other opportunities too such as Move In Day. You can walk around campus the first day of classes helping students find their way.

After the Enrollment Management presentations, Royce opened the floor for questions. Hulseberg asked if Jensen has considered an “opt-in” form that employees could fill out to make you aware of someone who might be interested in attending NIU? Jensen responded that they have been working on a form for alumni but not for employees. Jensen thought John presented a great idea and he will be following up on that.

There were other questions and suggestions about how staff can help with retention. Nicholson suggested strategic placement of building service workers many of whom develop relationships with students. Assigning those workers to residence halls and classrooms where there is a large student population.

#### **IV. John Butler, Board of Trustees/Merit Board**

John discussed three issues of importance for the Merit Board.

- 1.) Progress of proposed rule changes to Sec 250.110 of the Administrative Code (discharge rules), when brought and what Board is supposed to do. Under what circumstances can a university personnel decision be brought before the Merit Board and what the Board is expected to do in response to such a petition. The Merit Board approved the publishing of the proposed amendments in the Illinois Register.
- 2.) Ongoing conversion activity. Interested in hearing anything from the Council on this. I assume conversion is ongoing. I am monitoring that process.
- 3.) Emergency suspension of civil service rules in response to the pandemic and emergency operating measures. Butler explained this is not a declaration of emergency to permit laying people off. The University is monitored in its exercise of these powers and must document what

it is doing will be reviewed. Butler expressed interest in hearing from members of the council today or through Jeffry or John, any concerns you have about that as we adapt to the complex circumstances of the pandemic.

Regarding the conversion process, Doederlein responded that there is always the question of where we stand. This is possibly a never-ending process. The sense of how these are being done is a little bit better but always room for improvement of communication so that people do understand where they are in the process.

Regarding the emergency suspension of civil service rules, Hulseberg responded that his biggest concern was would any of the rules changes weaken civil service employee rights. Hulseberg explained that from what he has gathered, they do not. This is not going to make it more difficult for an employee to defend themselves or put them at a disadvantage.

P. Smith commented about the emergency declaration and its impact on NIU which so far has been de minimis. HR does have permission to suspend some of the rules, some testing operations have been suspended – mainly in person testing. HR is keeping track of the rules being suspended to report to the system office. Probation extension is not connected to the emergency declaration because it is allowed in the Civil Service rules.

**V. Public Comment:** None

## **VI. Announcements/Correspondence**

**President's announcements:** I am pleased to report that through my contact with the administration and other shared governance leaders the university is adamant in its commitment to supporting staff and prevent financial hardship to the furthest extent possible.

Kozumplik encouraged everyone to use Teams and, if you can, get a headset with a microphone which reduces audio feedback.

Skelly presented the question as to whether building service workers and others, who cannot work from home, going to be required to use their benefit time? Royce responded with his interpretation that if there is no work to be done they will be paid regularly. They may be on call.

P. Smith: There is information coming out today or tomorrow. The basic premise is that for the most part everyone will be paid. If you have additional questions, please, please contact me or Liz Guest and the FAQ on the website.

Nicholson: The on call thing is rough in a household with children and I wonder why there is not a schedule for bringing people in. Also, on the Working Remotely site there is help with teams and other learning opportunities.

P. Smith announced that re: student worker stipend issues there will be a communication as well regarding that specific topic closer to the 15<sup>th</sup> of April. There is a new law effective yesterday, Family First Coronavirus Response Act. There will be a communication going out about that.

Please be patient, we are working through these issues as they come up. Know that University leadership is hearing the feedback from HR making sure our communications are as employee friendly as student communications.

Kozumplik: Reporting on the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Mrs. Peter's book presentation is being re-scheduled. Most things are on hold, the next installment of 125 key moments has been released.

At the last meeting I had asked the question about faculty being offered early retirement. We forwarded it to P. Smith who forwarded it to Liz Guess who got back to us that they are seriously considering extending early retirement to other classifications for FY 21.

Klaper announced that the office of the Ombudsperson still exists and we are here to help. So if anyone is running into problems, please feel free to reach out to us.

## **VII. Shared Governance Reports**

**A. Board of Trustees**: March 19 emergency meeting to grant emergency powers.

**B. Student Government Association**: *Sabrina Self: "My apologizes everyone but I do have another meeting at 11:00am. To keep your time brief. SGA has been transitioning to the new online system by working on setting up a Blackboard Collaborative tab. The Senate in an effort to comply with this time cancelled all March meetings. However, the Senate will be attempting to meeting this Sunday at 5pm via BlackBoard. In addition our Rules and Procedures will be meeting today as a test run for the system. As SGA as a whole President Bolden and Speaker Pearson wrote a letter to the students explaining how SGA is here for the students for them at this time. In addition they have also applied for emergency funding for students who are out of employment, struggling, hours cut, etc. In addition the SGA has been reduced to only the President and the Speaker so our staff will be limited but I and several others are still committed to our roles. I have other updates in regards to off campus but for time If you have any questions please reach out to me at sself1@niu.edu"*

**C. Faculty Senate/University Council**: Kendall Thu reported the University Senate and University Council March meetings were canceled. They expect to have the April meetings via Teams. Thu has been working on the policy for student grading this semester. We ended up in support of that.

The University Council Personnel Committee (UCPC) recently met to review and approve a temporary change to the tenure clock for non-tenured faculty basically extending the tenure clock by one year for those who are non-tenured this semester. They have the option of going back to the regular clock if they want down the line The committee also passed a policy about giving faculty the option of using student evaluations in their faculty service reports and merit review. Thu relayed that he got a communication from Anna Quider, our federal legislative liaison, and there is money for higher education in the stimulus package but no information about what may be coming to NIU. Also, professor Thu mentioned that he has been in touch with his counterparts across the country and echoed what has been said, the way we are handling the Covid-19 situation with our leadership team and everything that you are doing, I am very proud of because it is not being handled quite as smoothly elsewhere.

P. Smith offered a follow-up comment about how NIU is definitely standing out as one of the leaders on how we are handling the situation and getting ahead of some of the issues that some

other institutions are just now preparing for and planning. Our administration is very committed to making our university the best that it can be.

Johnson asked do we know how long this can this be sustained based on the budget we have?

Thu responded that he was unable to give numbers, one document from Freeman included a bullet point that said throw your budget model out the window right now and we will just have to deal with it. The best answer is the university expects a financial hit; we are going to get through it. The administration is committed to ensuring all employees are paid and that operations continue as best they can. I have been very gratified by listening and connecting with my colleagues at a distance. These are testy times and we will survive, we'll get through it, be better for it. I am just gratified to hear the kind of commitment and effort everybody is putting in, especially for our students.

**D. Supportive Professional Staff Council** – no report

### **VIII. Committee Reports**

Royce requested that he would like the sub-committees to continue meeting. It is important to know that we are continuing to work and advocate.

**A. Elections and Appointments:** Monteiro reported the committee has been working on the election ballot that will again go out electronically. What we are doing new this year is to list openings on university committees. There will be a link at the bottom to reach the form to apply for a committee position. We are also working on updates to the ballot, tweaking the website and working up a new call for candidates. Some of this has been put on hold due to Covid-19 priorities.

**B. Legislative Committee:** Skelly reported this committee is on hold, unless something comes up.

**C. Public Relations/Activities:** Ayres reported they met via Teams mostly just checking in with each other. Our bowling activity is tabled and as everyone knows the Wellness Fair for yesterday was also canceled. **Update:** Monteiro, missed announcing the scholarship winners. Also the Outstanding Service Award recipients have been selected but not yet announced. The scholarship winners are: Hannah Secor \$1000; Olivia Monteiro \$1000; Morgan Haga \$1000; Samuel Hancock \$240.

**D. Workplace Issues:** Seeking a new chairperson due to Rave's change of circumstances, so anyone who would like to chair that committee, let me know.

**E. APAC:** Rankin reported that Audrey Southard, consultant to review HR and processes has agreed to be the Interim Director of HR. P. Smith added that Audrey has been a great asset to HR during this time frame. We report directly to the provost who is extremely busy at this time and having Audrey in place has been a good go between for us and the administration.

Rankin announced that the Presidential Awards ceremony usually scheduled for April has been rescheduled for October 1, Altgeld Auditorium from 1-3 p.m. We have also set the date for the Service Awards for October 14, 5-7 p.m., Duke Ellington Ballroom. More information will be forthcoming as a save the date. The APAC breakfast was canceled instead of postponement due to budget considerations. We have accepted nominations for the Patricia S. Siebrasse Award and are looking to see if we could present that award during the Presidential Awards ceremony on October 1.

**F. EAC:** Hulseberg reported we are meeting electronically April 22 and 23 Trustee Butler pretty much covered everything I was going to talk about and what we will be talking about at the EAC meeting. I will email everybody the suspension of the rules and if you have any questions please reach out to me or Pulchratia.

### **IX. Prior Business**

A. OSC Bylaws 3.1, 3.12 tabled indefinitely

### **X. New Business**

Royce reported that he sent last night a summary Jay prepared on behalf of the Elections & Appointments committee regarding university committee liaisons. This is something the SPS reports on every month. This is our attempt to do something similar. Royce turned the floor over to Jay who reported that the council used to have the university committee representatives come to the meetings and we tried to rotate them. But, with so many guests that went by the wayside. So we are looking for a way to make sure that information got to us. I'll go through and highlight some of the things I think are important.

**Athletic Board,** The graduation rate of NIU student athletes is 8% above Federal graduation rate for student athletes; third bullet: NIU admissions and as you know the SAT and ACT have been removed as requirements for admission to NIU so we wonder what that will do for those athletes who want to play collegiate sports because the NCAA requires an ACT score.

**Campus Parking Committee,** second to last bullet point, there was discussion about department vehicles that get ticketed. There is a policy that no department money may be used to pay fines so it is the driver of the vehicle who is responsible to pay any fines incurred. Also of note, **Karen Smith** was elected chair of the Campus Parking Committee.

**Campus Security:** DoIt update: The cybersecurity training will be re-vamped and will be offered through Blackboard next year.

**Library Advisory Committee:** The library has space issues so they are weeding out collections of non-circulating material that is duplicated. we have more than one copy.

**Parking Appeals Committee:** There is a lack of student involvement on the committee. Looking into other avenues to increase the interest in this committee. The committee has reached out to SGA for feedback. The meetings are often and lengthy. Using technology, eliminating in-person appeals and adjusting the time and date to accommodate students are some suggestions.

**Student Conduct Advisory Board:** They are looking at changes to the Student Conduct Code that relate to the Il Cannabis statute.

**Student Conduct Board:** This committee is working on moving toward a more restorative justice method which focuses on rehabilitation of the offender through counseling with the victim rather than moving straight to discipline.

**University Benefits Committee:** The hearing aid benefit has been raised to \$2500 every twenty-four months, from previous \$500 for twenty-four months.

Royce reminded everyone to feel free to contact these liaisons for further information.
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Royce provided a copy of the SPS' newly created performance evaluation form developed by SPS and presented to HR. HR is asking for feedback from all three of the Councils. Royce observed this form is more qualitative than the civil service form which is quantitative.

**Quick update by P. Smith:** Regarding Ellen Cabrera's request for more admin training. We are conducting more people admin training. Two were done this week. So we are getting the training out there to the departments and getting a lot of good feedback on that.

Royce asked for a Motion to Adjourn; Hulseberg so moved, seconded by Johnson. All in favor, none opposed, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Frances Mitchell on behalf of Stacey Bivens.