

Operating Staff Council Meeting

May 7, 2020

Teams Meeting

9:00-12:00 p.m.

Approved June 4, 2020

Present: Ayres, Berg, Bivens, Gingrich, Gutierrez-Vargas, Hulseberg, Johnson, Kerwin, Kozumplik, Meyer, Mitchell (Admin. Aide) Monteiro, Nicholson, Royce, Skelley, Smith, K., Teso-Warner, Ward, Wielert, Williams, Yates

Visitors: Klaper, Latham, Pearson, Ranken, Smith,P.

Guest Speakers: Tom O’Grady, Deputy General Counsel
Bryan Perry, General Counsel

I. Call to Order: Royce called meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and verified a quorum.

II. Roll Call: Attendance recorded by Teams.

III. Approval of Agenda: Royce called for a motion to approve the Agenda. (Nicholson/Kozumplik) All in favor, no abstentions, none opposed, the motion passed, the May 7, 2020 Agenda approved.

IV. Approval of Minutes: Royce asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2020 meeting. (Hulseberg/Johnson). Skelley noted that her name is repeatedly misspelled. The correction being made, all in favor, no abstentions, none opposed. The motion passed, the April 2, 2020 minutes was approved pending correction of misspellings.

V. Treasurer’s Report

Wielert reported that we were asked to request a lower budget next year. We don’t know yet if we will have our annual picnic, but we want that amount in our budget with a 10% increase. So Wielert will be requesting the cost of last year’s picnic plus 10% for a total of \$7,452. Wielert will deduct \$963 not needed for the newsletter and \$140 not needed for mailing the newsletter and at least two meetings of coffee at \$50 amounting to one increase and three deductions, a net reduction of \$476.

VI. Visiting Guests:

Bryan Perry, General Counsel

Mr. Perry said he was very happy to be here and talk about his office. He explained that the collective experience of their team and his lengthy labor relations experience presents a good baseline to talk about things before they get too far down the road. He said, “[W]e have a great team for whatever comes next.”

Greg Brady, Deputy General Counsel: Mr. Brady discussed his recent appointment as the **Designated Employee Representative** of NIU’s civil service system. He explained that becoming the DER adds a “tremendous amount of catch up” especially in our current situation.

Some questions from the Council were brought:

- Q.** Is the labor relations team shift to reporting to the General Counsel permanent?
- A.** **Perry** the shift is permanent right now but that could change, responding that he pledged to Lisa Freeman that whatever the university needs, he was “on-board.” Most of his career has been working with unions, allows him a different perspective: set expectations and clear communications. Noting the different world we are living in now, transparency, communication and follow-up—being at the table with him; being involved.
- Q.** Many students are facing legal situations ie. leaving homes, out of work. Is that something you are also helping with?
- A.** **Brady** responded explaining the difference between the Student Legal Assistance office with two attorneys who primarily assist students with their legal issues and is funded through student fees. Whereas the General Counsel’s Office, whose sole client is the university. However, we are now in a new world and we are helping the administration, faculty and staff help students and Joe Lovelace, Director of the Student Legal Assistance office, is one option for students.

Perry added that the offices stay in touch and the General Counsel’s office helps where they can, although they cannot assist directly.

- Q.** Your opinion on voluntary or mandatory give backs, could others besides the administration do that? And challenges ahead, i.e. furloughs, suspension of rules
- A.** **Perry:** Employee give back has not been presented. Among the administration, it is an opportunity to give back. I will take that idea back to Freeman.

Also, regarding a question about relaxation of rules for sick leave, Perry responded that the administration would “use every power within legal parameters to keep employees home and working.” Those decisions would be thoughtful and bargained for, stressing the importance of a partnership with employees.

- Q.** Tell us more about your role as Designated Employee Representative, your duties, responsibilities?
- A.** **Brady** responded that his role is to be the liaison and coordinator between the system office and NIU. He named examples of transactions that require his authorization. He has been reviewing the rules and procedures manual, developing a comfort level in the role, adding that he is available for consultation on civil service matters.
- Q.** Regarding the 16 month transition period for SPS employees—some employees have been transitioned sooner—has there been a shift?
- A.** **Smith, P.** replied that when HR knows there is going to be a transition, they move sooner rather than later. After some discussion it was decided by Brady that there appears to be a conflict between civil service and SPS notice rules and said he would be keeping his eye on that issue.

VII. Public Comment: None

VIII. Announcements/Correspondence:

A. President's Announcements:

Jeffry Royce thanked council members for their suggestions and ideas, which sent him “well armed” into meetings. If stay at home is lifted, some may remain. Matt Streb is heading up Task Forces and the Employee Assistance Program is offering support.

One council member finds it very concerning that while President Freeman is committed to all stakeholders; staff stakeholders with constructive ideas about returning to work, are not represented on any of the return to work task forces.

B. Pulchratia Smith, HR, updated the council on HR activities. Smith has been working with Audrey Southard, interim HR Director, on policies/guidelines etc. coming out of the President's office. They have been having weekly meetings with other HR directors. NIU is in a better place than many of our colleagues at other state schools. Trying to stay on top of the changes due to COVID-19. I don't know any more about returning to campus for our employees. I expect there will be some roll out but I don't know how that looks. I don't know the composition of the committees.

Miriah Ranken, HR, noted that Liz Guess is hosting workshop on retirement. If you want more information, email HR and they will get you signed up.

Early Retirement: Smith did not have details but said those eligible would have received notice by May 15. Eligible employees may indicate interest without committing. The employee would get a packet and would have 45 days to make a decision to be effective no later than August 1, 2020. And yes, health insurance rates are going up.

Smith also briefly explained Layoffs v Furloughs:

Layoff is a separation from the University. You are no longer an employee and are eligible for unemployment, however, benefits are terminated on the last day of work. Recalls are on seniority basis.

Furlough means you are still employed you just work and get paid for fewer hours; you are not eligible for unemployment compensation; you keep your insurance but not your benefits. See the Civil Service System website for more detailed information. It was noted that the BOT has to discuss furloughs 30 days before employees notified.

C. Cindy Kozumplik announced that all 125th Anniversary events are suspended for right now with no clarification on when this is going to be lifted. I have nothing to report.

D. Sarah Klaper, Ombudsperson: Two things: every Friday gay and I are holding an open house 11-12. Feel free to join us for questions or friendly chat. See also our Teams presentation on trials and tribulations of working from home. Now we realize some of the challenges we face. If you want to talk through that, I have some tips and pointers, mostly a discussion. Wednesday 11:30-12:30 One hour. Teams link on calendar. Email if you want to join and we will forward a link to you.

IX. Shared Governance Reports

BOT – no meeting

SGA- met and had elections, new officers, new leaders

Faculty Senate- Kendall Thu was re-elected as President of the Senate and Executive Director of University Council. Thu reported that both the Faculty Senate and the University Council voted overwhelmingly to: reduce the number of committees at the University; turn over academic matters to the Faculty Senate; reduce size of the University Council, equalizing it's membership and to make the required Constitutional changes which is on-going. The BOT must approve these changes at their June meeting. Thanks to Jeffry and Cathy for the effort put in discussing and working through the process where we all compromised. (Jeffry noted increased representation from 6% to 31%.)

SPSC- no report met 3 weeks ago with little to discuss.

University Council- Thu reported the University Council voted to approve Article 11, (Establishment of Grievance Process for Non-Union Faculty and Staff) that will be posted to the Policy Library. Thu said he would keep everyone updated moving forward.

X. Committee Reports

Elections & Appointments: Monteiro reported that the committee met twice. The first call for candidates only garnered 6 applications. I sent out some recruitment emails and we extended the deadline. As of this morning we were up to 14. The new deadline is May 8.

Other dates: Ballots go out electronically on May 18 and voting ends Friday, May 22. Newly elected representatives/alternates are invited to the June 4 meeting and are officially seated at the July 2 meeting. At our June meeting we will be taking nominations for council officers. We're still trying to figure out how we are going to do elections. We are going to be asking the Executive Committee to look into a more consistent number of seats up for election each year.

Legislative Committee: Skelley reported that they did not meet but will be holding a meeting to begin looking at the idea of evening out the number of vacant seats each year.

Public Relations/Activities Committee: Ayres reported they met via Teams just to check in and saying hello.

Workplace Issues Committee: Royce reported that the committee elected Natasha Johnson as the new chair person. They are planning to come up with some communication about PPE for returning workers.

APAC: Ranken reported APAC held a short meeting to cancel the annual breakfast in April. Ranken also thanked the Operating Staff Council for allowing APAC to present their Patricia S. Siebrasse Award at the Service Awards ceremony on October 14, 2020.

EAC: Hulseberg reported they met on April 23 where they discussed suspension of rules across the state regarding the extension of probationary periods and how each campus utilizes that. The System Office will be scrutinizing those decisions. We also had a discussion about furloughing noting that the staff level is where cuts will be made. We also discussed a voluntary program by staff to give back some of their earnings or volunteer to furlough. However, if some employees give up time willingly and then more cuts are made, we are not sure how that would work out. Not sure what will come. I meet with the Merit Board next week and EAC in July.

XI. Prior Business

Stacey is caring for her mother. She did send the March minutes. I will send them out and we can vote to approve them at our next meeting. Royce moved to table the March minutes; Kozumplik asked if that vote could be done by email. Royce made a friendly amendment to allow approval by email; Nicholson seconded, all in favor, none opposed, no abstentions. The motion passes, the March minutes will be approved by email.¹

XII. New Business:

Some of what we just created, OSC Team and a number of channels, seems to be working pretty well, and I hope we can use it to work more effectively. But there have been some problems sending an email to one channel. Kozumplik suggested that someone do a summary of what is put in Teams and then that content is added in announcements?

XIII. Adjournment

Royce called for a motion to adjourn, Kozumplik so moved, seconded by Johnson. All in favor, no abstentions, none opposed. The motion passed, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Frances Mitchell on behalf of Stacey Bivens.

¹ The March minutes were approved at a Special Meeting on May 20, 2020