

**Minutes**  
**Operating Staff Council**  
February 4, 2021  
**Teams – 9:00 a.m.**  
**Approved March 4, 2021**

***Present:*** Dave Berg, Patricia Gingrich, Angie Gutierrez-Vargas, Sandy Jakubiak, Natasha Johnson, Cindy Kozumplik, Frances Mitchell (Administrative Aide), Jay Monteiro, Holly Nicholson, Tammie Pulak, Sara Richter, Jeffry Royce, Mary Schlagel, Nancy Skelley, Karen Smith, Tracey Ward, Debbie Williams, Linda Yates

***Guests:*** Brad Beyer, Deborah Bonnell, Gerald Bonnell, Renata Catlett, Sarah Chinniah, Bethany Cockburn, Richard Collin, Phillip Davis, Chris Doe, Pat Erickson, Evan Forbes, James Garman, Christopher Gilbert, Liz Guess, John Hulseberg, Jory Keller, Sarah Klaper, Beatrice Kooker, Caroline Kosmel, Lauren Kurpius, Laura Lagreid, Rebecca Leneau, Erica McFarland, Rave Meyer, Christine Monteiro, Roderic Moyer, Rolf Oxnevad, Daksha Patel, Mark Pietrowski, Miriah Ranken, Tim Rasmussen, Pulchratia Smith, Roselyn Snell, Theresa Stack, Matt Streb, Marzena Szmydt, Jenna Villani, Mandy Wescott, Rick White, Rachel Xidis

**I. Call to Order**

President Johnson called the regular meeting of the OSC to order at 9:00 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Attendance was recorded by Monteiro.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

Kozumplik made a motion to accept the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Schlagel and passed by unanimous vote.

**IV. Approval of January 7, 2021, Minutes**

Nicholson moved to accept the January 7, 2021, minutes. The motion was seconded by Ward and passed by unanimous vote.

**V. Treasurer's Report**

Yates reported. The budget balance is still static at \$9,462.54 with no expenditures this month. When the new plaques for the Outstanding Service Awards recipients are purchased, Yates will update us on the budget at that time. All new OSC members have now received their name tags. Kozumplik moved to accept the

Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Gingrich and passed by unanimous vote.

## **VI. Visiting Presenters**

A. Sarah Chinniah, NIU's CFO, introduced herself by saying that she has been with the university around three years. Her primary focus is finance and budget, and she also oversees technology and risk management. She said NIU is having challenges with resources. Facilities and investments are not where we would like them to be. The fiscal year 2021 budget was \$389 million revenue, with expenses at \$421 million. This left a \$32 million deficit. The Board of Trustees approved this budget. Everyone thought that by January 2021 things would be more normal. The way things stand currently there is a \$26 million deficit. Chinniah said that the hiring chill, and the unfortunate and difficult staff actions that were taken at the end of the last fiscal year did help. NIU has received a federal allotment of \$24 million. Students will receive \$7.5 million of this, while \$16 million will go to the university, leaving NIU with a \$10 million deficit at the end of fiscal year 2021. Chinniah announced that furloughs and large layoffs are off the table for the rest of this fiscal year.

Regarding classes, she sees a hybrid class environment through summer semester 2021, with more in-person courses offered in fall semester. With so many NIU employees still working from home, she wants to see how COVID testing and vaccinations go before she can say what working at the university will look like.

Royce addressed Chinniah by reminding her of a statement she made in the latest University Council meeting. "Every dollar we save now, is a dollar available in 2022 for campus." Chinniah said, yes, each dollar protects NIU and enables progress and sustainability for the next year. She explained that before COVID, NIU was making a turn and now the university is back to the previous way of operating. It is suspected that the state will not help NIU as much in fiscal year 2022 and there will be as much as a 5-10% reduction in assistance. The university is forecasting an 8% reduction. She was asked about lay-offs either campus-wide or by department. She said she is not aware of any campus-wide actions at this point.

Chinniah was asked about NIU faculty/staff COVID vaccinations. According to Matt Streb and Protecting the Pack, there is no allotment for faculty or staff. NIU is following federal guidelines. OSC President Johnson explained that public schools K-12 are vaccinated first. Do not wait for NIU if you can get a vaccination through your primary medical provider. Nicholson also advised that people can sign up online through the DeKalb County Health Department.

Chinniah shared that President Freeman and Provost Ingram are trying to understand efficiencies and what changes can be made to help workload challenges across campus. They want to make the environment comfortable so that employees will make suggestions – not to make jobs expendable, but to make opportunities, explore things to advance careers, to do the jobs we were hired for, and make the university stronger.

Hulseberg asked about the prevailing rate policy going through the Policy Library and whether it had gone through the comment period yet. He also inquired about charge backs. For example, it costs \$92.50 an hour all work being performed on campus by Physical Plant employees. He's been told this high amount is due to overhead costs. Where does that money go? Will the senior leadership team consider eliminating the charge back system for Physical Plant work, like many other areas on campus have already? Could Chinniah find out? She answered that this is a tough question. At a fundamental level, it is taking money from one side of the university and giving it to the other. She agreed it is important and it should be fixed. She is not as knowledgeable about rates. As NIU resumes multi-year planning, this can be discussed. Johnson pointed out that moving money might mean shifting employees.

Royce pointed out that communication seems to freeze up at the director/middle management level, although this does vary from area to area. Employees without computers have a very difficult time getting information. Nicholson added that sometimes she's not even aware her employees did not get needed information. She asked Chinniah to point this out to the relevant people.

Chinniah ended by saying that NIU has a very engaged shared governance voice. She respects the structures that exist in committees and focus groups, for example. She asked us to stay the course with NIU. We were almost at multi-year planning until COVID. We will get there.

B. Management Professor Bethany Cockburn is conducting an online Qualtrics survey and would like to interview people to find out if COVID affected/is affecting their decision to retire. She asked the OSC's assistance to help her contact NIU staff who have retired since March 2020 or are planning to retire in 2021. Her research is IRAP (Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning) approved and completely confidential.

## **VII. Public Comment**

Roderic Moyer began by praising Klaper and Erickson's professionalism. He addressed the OSC, particularly Monteiro and Royce, who had been in a University Council meeting when Moyer spoke to that group. He is speaking out about an incident that happened in 2019 between him and NIU instructor Michele Duffy in Graham Hall. Royce assured Moyer that he keeps an open mind. Moyer provided links in the Teams meeting chat to two undergraduate projects he had completed.

### **VIII. Announcements/Correspondence**

#### **A. Natasha Johnson: President's Announcements**

Johnson shared that selection will begin next week for the search committee for the Chief Human Resources Officer. F. Mitchell has gotten the financials for the Civil Service Emergency Fund and she knows what needs to happen with the NIU Foundation. Nicholson moved to create an ad hoc committee for the emergency fund. The motion was seconded by Yates and passed by unanimous vote. Yates will chair this committee, and she and Mitchell will find four other people to form the committee.

#### **B. Pulchratia Smith: Human Resource Services (HRS)**

Smith reported. She asked that if HRS reaches out to any of us (Civil Service employees) to ask for assistance, please participate! This participation usually is some form of pre-testing. The search for the new Chief Human Resources Officer is getting started. The position will probably not be filled by July 1, 2021. Pulchratia will be presenting workshops. One will be a Civil Service Overview scheduled with the Employee Assistance Program training offerings. The other will be a session on writing job descriptions that include specialty factors. Both workshops will be recorded. She also reported that there are no plans for lay-offs for the rest of this fiscal year.

### **IX. Shared Governance Reports**

#### **A. Board of Trustees**

The Board discussed the approval of fees.

#### **B. Faculty Senate**

Discussed the restructuring of shared governance and listened to committee reports.

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

No report

#### **D. Student Government Association (SGA)**

Beyer reported. The SGA voted to approve a new layout. Now students will no longer be represented by a physical district model, instead their representation will be through their colleges and resource centers. With election season coming up, Beyer also said that the SGA wants to make the transition smoother for next year's representatives, revamp finance policies and procedures, and make updates and improve how they fund organizations more equitably.

#### E. University Council (UC)

President Freeman shared her gratitude for the cooperation shown for COVID surveillance testing. The partnership with Northwestern is going well. An additional 100,000 saliva testing kits have been purchased. The state has paid NIU \$47 million of the \$80 million owed to us.

### **X. Committee Reports**

#### A. Elections and Appointments

Monteiro reported. The committee has done a test pilot for the voting system to be used for the OSC elections. Microsoft Forms has been chosen and will be used this year instead of the Star System. Monteiro also brought up the topic of OSC members for the University Council. He would like to look at how to choose operating staff members as well as OSC members for these positions.

#### B. Legislative Committee

Nicholson reported. She conducted the second reading of Article 3. Schlagel made a motion to approve the changes to Article 3. The motion was seconded by Kozumplik. There was no discussion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. Nicholson then conducted the first reading of OSC Bylaw Article 4: Role of Administrative Aide. If there is feedback on the changes, please contact her. The second reading will be done at the OSC's March 4, 2021, meeting.

#### C. Public Relations/Activities

Monteiro read K. Smith's notes. The committee met January 25. If anyone has information for the "Did You Know" segment in the *Northern Staff News*, please send it to Rave Meyer. They are also looking for names of Rookies – people who have been employed at NIU for five years or less. There were seven applications for the Dependent Scholarship Award. The deadline for applications was January 31, 2021. The deadline for nominations for the Operating Staff Outstanding Service Award is February 12, 2021. The Campus Parking Committee is considering a proposal to increase the cost of permits. If this happens, the increase would occur by a certain percentage per year.

#### D. Workplace Guidance

Yates reported. The committee met January 27. They have a box on Teams for anonymous submissions or Yates can be e-mailed. The committee is encouraging everyone to participate in the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women survey which is available until February 24. Yates praised the Building Service Workers who are trained to use electro-static units as well as the mobile purifying units that are provided to clean rooms for in-person classes and labs. She advised that the committee is available to provide guidance on workplace issues.

#### **E. Administrative Professionals Advisory Council (APAC)**

Ranken reported. APAC will be taking nominations for the Pat S. Siebrasse Administrative Professionals Award for Excellence. April 21, 2021 is Administrative Professionals Day. This year the day will be celebrated online. Speakers will be Brian Smith from the Employee Assistance Program and President Freeman.

#### **F. Employee Advisory Committee (EAC)**

Hulseberg reported. EAC met remotely on January 28, 2021. There will be a few discharge hearings at the next Merit Board meeting in February, but none involving NIU. Hulseberg shared that other universities are having struggles that NIU is not. One is telling staff to volunteer to help with COVID efforts, while others are still grappling with the Supportive Professional Staff (AP) to Civil Service transition.

### **XI. Prior Business**

#### **A. OSC Plaques**

Hulseberg gave an update. Additional plaques are needed for the Outstanding Service Award recipients, and the plaque for OSC presidents needs to be updated. Once he gets a quote from Hirschbein Trophies, he will let Yates and the OSC know the estimated cost.

### **XII. New Business**

### **XIII. Adjournment**

Nicholson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Monteiro and passed by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stacey Bivens, Secretary  
Operating Staff Council